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Everybody's
NUMBER FOUR OCTOBER, 1921 VOLUME XLV

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

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The Bag That Grinned

A Complete Novelette

Ten minutes after the pay-roll messenger had been killed by a motor-car, the bag and its twenty thousand cash contents disappeared. Its recovery and its part in the solution of a mysterious crime provide an absorbing story.

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Laugh and grow thin—or fat. Either way

Turtle-Doves

By Walter De Leon

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Timber's Tragic Story — The Uneven Struggle Between the Destroyer and the Preserver — A Red-blooded Novel of To-day

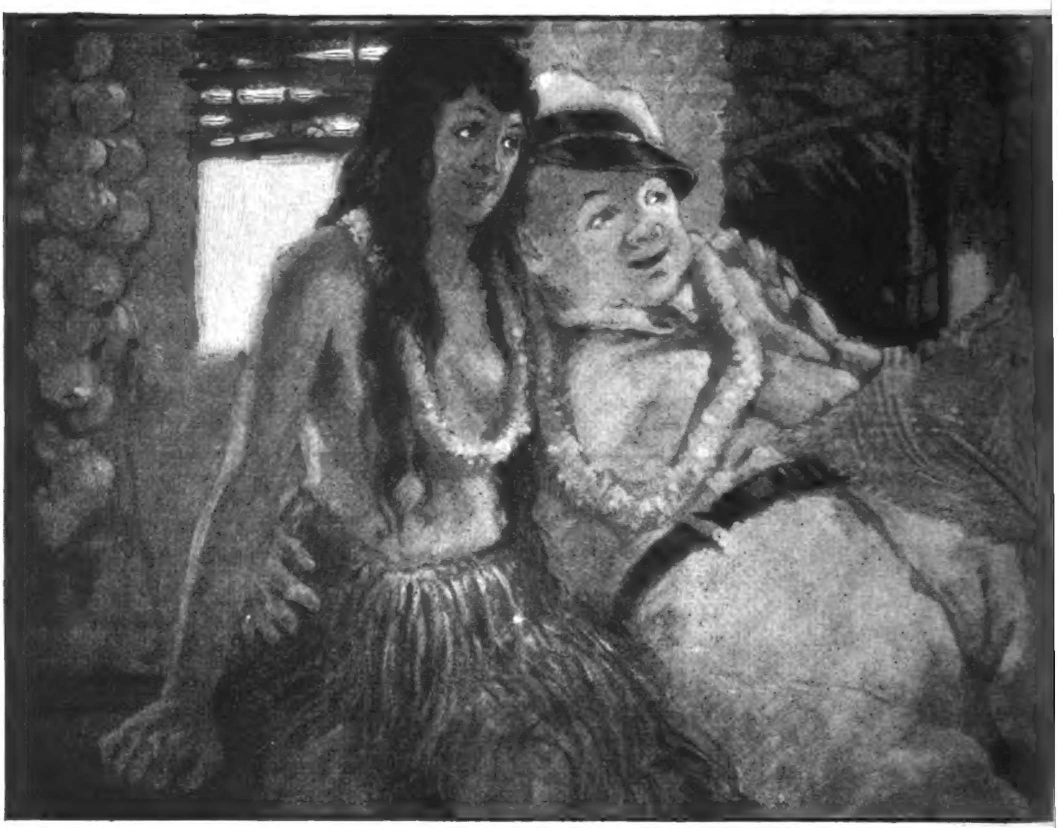
Foraker's Folly

By Harold Titus

INSPIRED by indignation at seeing his boyhood playground destroyed, and by a duty he felt to the public, Mr. Titus has written a big story with a big purpose. He loves the forest and its people. He knows the tragedies and the comedies of the lumber regions and he has portrayed them sympathetically. Seldom have we read a novel containing so many characters that live, that survive in memory. You will love John Taylor, the blundering, conceited boy who ended by finding he knew nothing; but even that is something. You'll worship Helen Foraker, Humpy Bryant, Black Joe, too, and old Luke Taylor and Aunty May and the kids. You won't admire Jim Harris, Phil Rowe and Marcia Murray, but you will remember them.

Begins in November *Everybody's*

Out October 15



It was the girl's father who suggested that the captain should take her away with
against the captain, urged him by pressure

HONOLULU*

Illustrated by

A Breath of the South Seas, a
a Woman—Just Such an Odd
to Meet in Such a Setting. An
Famous Author

THE wise traveler travels only in imagination. An old Frenchman (he was really a Savoyard) once wrote a book called "Voyage Autour de ma Chambre." I have not read it and do not even know what it is about, but the title stimulates my fancy. In such a journey I could circumnavigate the globe. Those are the best journeys, the journeys that you take at your own fireside; for then you lose none of your illusions.

There are people who take salt in their coffee. They say it gives it a tang, a savor, which is peculiar and fascinating. In the same way there are certain places, surrounded by a halo of romance, to which the inevitable disillusionment which you must experience on seeing them gives a singular spice. You had expected something wholly beautiful and you get an impression which is infinitely more complicated than any that beauty can give you. It is like the weakness in the character of a great man which may make him less admirable but certainly makes him more interesting.

Nothing had prepared me for Honolulu. It is so far away from Europe, it is reached

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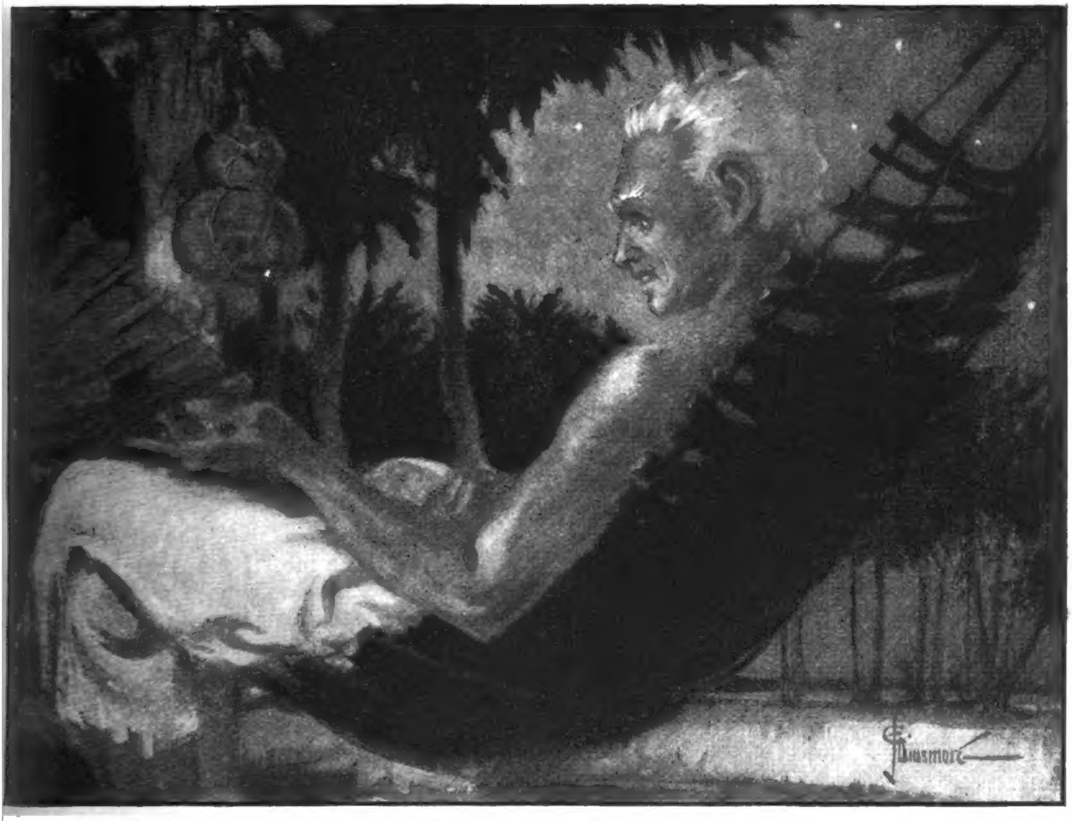


him. They discussed the matter in a friendly fashion while the girl, nestling of her hands and her soft smiling glances.

By W. Somerset Maugham

E. J. Dinsmore

Strange Tale of Two Men and Triangle as One Might Expect Unusual Piece of Work by the and Playwright.

after so long a journey from San Francisco, so strange and so charming associations are attached to the name, that at first I could hardly believe my eyes. I do not know that I had formed in my mind any very exact picture of what I expected, but what I found caused me a great surprise. It is a typical western city. Shacks are cheek by jowl with stone mansions; dilapidated frame houses stand next door to smart stores with plate-glass windows; electric cars rumble noisily along the streets; and motors—Fords, Buicks, Packards—line the pavement. The shops are filled with all the necessities of American civilization.

Along the streets crowd an unimaginable assortment of people. It is the meeting-place of East and West. The very new rubs shoulders with the immeasurably old. And if you have not found the romance you expected you have come upon something singularly intriguing. All these strange people live close to each other, with different languages and different thoughts; they believe in different gods and they have different values; two passions alone they share: love and hunger.

And somehow as you watch them you have an impression of extraordinary vitality. Though the air is so soft and the sky so blue, you have, I know not why, a feeling of something hotly passionate that beats like a throbbing pulse through the crowd. Though the native policeman at the corner, standing on a platform, with a white club to direct the traffic, gives the scene an air of respectability, you can not but feel that it is a respectability only of the surface; a little below there is darkness and mystery. It gives you just that thrill, with a little catch at the heart, that you have when at night in the forest the silence trembles on a sudden with the low, insistent beating of a drum. You are all expectant of I know not what.

IF I have dwelt on the incongruity of Honolulu, it is because just this, to my mind, gives its point to the story I want to tell. It is a story of primitive superstition, and it startles me that anything of the sort should survive in a civilization which, if not very distinguished, is certainly very elaborate. I can not get over the fact that such incredible things should happen, or at least be thought to happen, right in the middle, so to speak, of telephones, tramcars and daily papers.

My friend Winter acted as my guide and I was entertained by the proprietary, yet ironical, air with which he showed me the city. He thought in his heart that there was none in the United States to equal it, but he saw quite clearly that his attitude was comic. He drove me round to the various buildings and swelled with satisfaction when I expressed a proper admiration for their architecture. He showed me the houses of rich men.

"All our best families are missionary families," he said. "You're not very much in Honolulu unless your father or your grandfather converted the heathen."

"Is that so?"

"Do you know your Bible?"

"Fairly," I answered.

"There is a text which says: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge.' In Honolulu things are rather different. The fathers brought Christianity to the Kanaka and the son jumped his land."

"Heaven helps those who help themselves," I murmured.

"It surely does. By the time the natives of this island had embraced Christianity they had nothing else they could afford to embrace. The kings gave the missionaries land as a mark of esteem, and the missionaries bought land by way of laying up treasure in heaven. Oh, it's a fine thing to have a father who came here fifty years ago to spread the faith."

He looked at his watch.

"Gee, it's stopped. That means it's time to have a cocktail."

We sped along an excellent road, bordered with red hibiscus, and came back into the town.

"Have you been to the Union Saloon?"

"Not yet."

"We'll go there."

I knew it was the most famous spot in Honolulu and I entered it with a lively curiosity. You get to it by a narrow passage from King Street, and in the passage are offices, so that thirsty souls may be supposed bound for one of these just as well as for the saloon. It is a large square room, with three entrances, and opposite the bar, which runs the length of it, two corners have been partitioned off into little cubicles. Legend states that they were built so that King Kalakaua might drink there without being seen by his subjects, and it is pleasant to think that in one or other of these he may have sat over his bottle, a coal-black potentate, with Robert Louis Stevenson. There is a portrait of him, in oils.

The place seemed to belong not to the modern, hustling world that I had left in the bright street outside, but to one that was dying. It had the savor of the day before yesterday. Dingy and dimly lit, it had a vaguely mysterious air and you could imagine that it would be a fit scene for shady transactions. It suggested a more lurid time, when ruthless men carried their lives in their hands, and violent deeds diapered the monotony of life.

When we went in, the saloon was fairly full. A group of business men stood together at the bar, discussing affairs, and in a corner two Kanakas were drinking. Two or three men who might have been storekeepers were shaking dice. The rest of the company plainly followed the sea; they were captains of tramps, first mates and engineers. Behind the bar, busily making the Honolulu cocktail for which the place was famous, served two large half-castes in white, fat, clean-shaven and dark-skinned, with thick curly hair and large bright eyes.

Winter seemed to know more than half the company, and when we made our way to the bar a little fat man in spectacles, who was standing by himself, offered him a drink.

"No, you have one with me, Captain," said Winter.

He turned to me.

"I want you to know Captain Butler."

The little man shook hands with me. We began to talk; but, my attention distracted by my surroundings, I took small notice of him, and after we had each ordered a cocktail we separated. When we had got into the motor again and were driving away, Winter said to me:

"I'm glad we ran up against Butler. I wanted you to meet him. What did you think of him?"

"I don't know that I thought very much of him at all," I answered.

"Do you believe in the supernatural?"

"I don't exactly know that I do." I smiled.

"A very queer thing happened to him a year or two ago. You ought to have him tell you about it."

"What sort of thing?"

Winter did not answer my question.

"I guess I won't tell you myself. You ought to hear it from his own lips so that you can judge. How are you fixed up for to-night?"

"I've got nothing on at all."

"Well, I'll get hold of him between now and then and see if we can't go down to his ship."

Winter told me something about him. Captain Butler had spent all his life on the Pacific. He had been in much better circumstances than he was now, for he had been first officer and then captain of a passenger-boat plying along the coast of California, but he had lost his ship and a number of passengers had been drowned.

"Drink, I guess," said Winter.

Of course there had been an inquiry, which had cost him his certificate, and then he drifted further afield. For some years he had knocked about the South Seas, but he was now in command of a small schooner which sailed between Honolulu and the various islands of the group. It belonged to a Chinese to whom the fact that his skipper had no certificate meant only that he could be had for lower wages, and to have a white man in charge was always an advantage.

And now that I had heard this about him I took the trouble to remember more exactly what he was like. I recalled his round spectacles and the round blue eyes behind them, and so gradually reconstructed him before my mind. He was a little man, without angles, plump, with a round face like the full moon and a little fat round nose. He had fair short hair, and he was red-faced and clean-shaven. He had plump hands, dimpled on the knuckles, and short fat legs. He was a jolly soul, and the tragic experience he had gone through seemed to have left him unscarred. Though he must have been thirty-four or thirty-five, he looked much younger.

IT IS very curious to observe the differences of emotional response that you find in different people. Some can go through terrific battles, the fear of imminent death and unimaginable horrors, and preserve their souls unscathed, while with others the trembling of the moon on a solitary sea or the song of a bird in a thicket will cause a convulsion great enough to transform their entire being. Is it due to strength or weakness, want of imagination, or instability of character? I do not know.

When I called up in my fancy that scene of shipwreck, with the shrieks of the drowning and the terror, and then later the ordeal of the inquiry, the bitter grief of those who sorrowed for the lost, and the harsh things he must have read of himself in the papers, the shame and the disgrace, it came to me with a shock to remember that Captain Butler had talked with the frank obscenity of a schoolboy of the Hawaiian girls and of Ewelei, the red light district, and of his successful adventures. He laughed readily, and one would have thought he could never laugh again. I remembered his shining white teeth; they were his best feature. He began to interest me, and thinking of him and his gay insouciance I forgot the particular story to hear which I was to see him again. I wanted to see him rather to find out if I could a little more what sort of man he was.

Winter made the necessary arrangements and after dinner we went down to the waterfront. The ship's boat was waiting for us, and we rowed out. The schooner was anchored some way across the harbor not far from the breakwater. We came alongside and I heard the sound of a ukulele. We clambered up the ladder.

"I guess he's in the cabin," said Winter, leading the way.

It was a small cabin, bedraggled and dirty, with a table against one side and a broad bench all round upon which slept, I supposed, such passengers as were ill-advised enough to travel in such a ship. A petroleum lamp gave a dim light. The ukulele was being played by a native girl, and Butler was lolling on the seat, half-lying, with his head on her shoulder and an arm round her waist.

"Don't let us disturb you, Captain," said Winter facetiously.

"Come right in," said Bütler, getting up and shaking hands with us. "What'll you have?"

IT WAS a warm night, and through the open door you saw countless stars in a heaven that was still almost blue. Captain Butler wore a sleeveless vest, showing his fat white arms, and a pair of incredibly dirty trousers. His feet were bare, but on his curly head he wore a very old, a very shapeless felt hat.

"Let me introduce you to my girl. Ain't she a peach?"

We shook hands with a very pretty person. She was a good deal taller than the captain, and even the Mother Hubbard, which the missionaries of a past generation had, in the interests of decency, forced on the unwilling natives, could not conceal the beauty of her form. One could not but suspect that age would burden her with a certain corpulence; but now she was graceful and alert. Her brown skin had an exquisite translucency and her eyes were magnificent. Her black hair, very thick and rich, was coiled round her head in a massive plait. When she smiled in a greeting that was charmingly natural, she showed teeth that were small, even and white. She was certainly a most attractive creature.

It was easy to see that the captain was madly in love with her. He could not take his eyes off her; he wanted to touch her all the time. That was very easy to understand; but what seemed to me stranger was that the girl was apparently in love with him. There was a light in her eyes that was unmistakable, and her lips were slightly parted as though in a sigh of desire. It was thrilling. And it seemed to me that the dingy cabin was transfigured and now it seemed a fit and proper scene for such extremity of passion. I liked to think of these lovers sailing off together in the night over the empty spaces of the Pacific from one green, hilly island to another. A faint breeze of romance softly fanned my cheek.

And yet Butler was the last man in the world with whom you would have associated romance, and it was hard to see what there was in him to arouse love. In the clothes he wore now he looked podgier than ever and his round spectacles gave his round face the look of a prim cherub. He suggested rather a curate who had gone to the dogs. His conversation was peppered with the quaintest Americanisms, and it is because I despair of reproducing these that, at whatever loss of vividness, I mean to narrate the story he told me a little later in my own words. Moreover, he was unable to frame a sentence without an oath, though a good-natured one, and his speech, albeit offensive only to prudish ears, in print would seem coarse.

He was a mirth-loving man, and perhaps that accounted not a little for his successful amours; since women, for the most part frivolous creatures, are excessively bored by the seriousness with which men treat them, and they can seldom resist the buffoon who makes them laugh. Their sense of humor is crude. Diana of Ephesus is always prepared to fling prudence to the winds for the red-nosed comedian who sits on his hat. I realized that Captain Butler had charm. If I had not known the tragic story of the shipwreck, I should have thought he had never had a care in his life.

Our host had rung the bell on our entrance and now a Chinese cook came in with more glasses and several bottles of soda. The whisky and the captain's empty glass stood already on the table. But when I saw the Chinese I positively started, for he was certainly the ugliest man I had ever seen in my life. He was very short, but thick set, and he had a bad limp. He wore a singlet and a pair of trousers that had been white, but were now filthy, and, perched on a shock of bristly gray hair, an old tweed deer-stalker. It would have been grotesque on any Chinese, but on him it was outrageous. His broad, square face was very flat as though it had been bashed in by a mighty fist, and it was deeply pitted by small-pox; but the most revolting thing in him was a very pronounced hare-lip which had never been operated on, so that his upper lip, cleft, went up in an angle to his nose, and in the opening was a huge yellow fang. It was horrible. He came in with the end of a cigaret at the corner of his mouth, and this, I do not know why, gave him a devilish expression.

He poured out the whisky and opened a bottle of soda.

"Don't drown it, John," said the captain.

He said nothing, but handed a glass to each of us. Then he went out.

"I saw you lookin' at my Chink," said Butler, with a grin on his fat, shining face.

"I should hate to meet him on a dark night," I said.

"He sure is homely," said the captain, and for some reason he seemed to say it with a peculiar satisfaction. "But he's fine for one thing, I'll tell the world; you just have to have a drink every time you look at him."

But my eyes fell on a calabash that hung against the wall over the table, and I got up to look at it. I had been hunting for an old one and this was better than any I had seen outside the museum.

"It was given me by a chief over on one of the islands," said the captain, watching me. "I done him a good turn and he wanted to give me something good."

"He certainly did," I answered.

I was wondering whether I could discreetly make Captain Butler an offer for it. I could not imagine that he set any store by such an article, when, as though he read my thoughts, he said:

"I wouldn't sell that for ten thousand dollars."

"I guess not," said Winter. "It would be a crime to sell it."

"Why?" I asked.

"That comes into the story," returned Winter. "Don't it, Captain?"

"It sure does."

"Let's hear it then."

"The night's young yet," he answered.

The night distinctly lost its youth before he satisfied my curiosity, and meanwhile we drank a great deal too much whisky while Captain Butler narrated his experiences of San Francisco in the old days and of the South Seas. At last the girl fell asleep. She lay curled up on the seat, with her face on her brown arm, and her bosom rose and fell gently with her breathing. In sleep she looked sullen, but darkly beautiful.

HE HAD found her on one of the islands in the group among which, whenever there was cargo to be got, he wandered with his crazy old schooner. The Kanakas have little love for work, and the laborious Chinese, the cunning Japs, have taken the trade out of their hands. Her father had a strip of land on which he grew taro and bananas and he had a boat in which he went fishing. He was vaguely related to the mate of the schooner, and it was he who took Captain Butler up to the shabby little frame house to spend an idle evening. They took a bottle of whisky with them and the ukulele. The captain was not a shy man and when he saw a pretty girl he made love to her. He could speak the native language fluently and it was not long before he had overcome the girl's timidity. They spent the evening singing and dancing, and by the end of it she was sitting by his side and he had his arm round her waist.

It happened that they were delayed on the island for several days and the captain, at no time a man to hurry, made no effort to shorten his stay. He was very comfortable in the snug little harbor and life was long. He had a swim round his ship in the morning and another in the evening. There was a chandler's shop on the water-front where sailormen could get a drink of whisky, and he spent the best part of the day there, playing cribbage with the half-caste who owned it. At night the mate and he went up to the house where the pretty girl lived and they sang a song or two and told stories. It was the girl's father who suggested that he should take her away with him. They discussed the matter in a friendly fashion, while the girl, nestling against the captain, urged him by the pressure of her hands and her soft, smiling glances. He had taken a fancy to her and he was a domestic man. He was a little dull sometimes at sea and it would be very pleasant to have a pretty little creature like that about the old ship. He was of a practical turn too, and he recognized that it would be useful to have some one around to darn his socks and look after his linen. He was tired of having his things washed by a Chink who tore everything to pieces. The natives washed much better, and now and then when the captain went ashore at Honolulu he liked to cut a dash in a smart duck suit.

It was only a matter of arranging a price. The father wanted two hundred and fifty dollars, and the captain, never a thrifty man, could not put his hands on such a sum. But he was a generous one, and with the girl's soft face against his, he was not inclined to haggle. He offered to give a hundred and fifty dollars then and another hundred in three months.

There was a good deal of argument and the parties could not come to any agreement that night, but the idea had fired the captain, and he could not sleep as well as usual. He kept dreaming of the lovely girl and each time he awoke it was with the pressure of her soft, sensual lips on his. He cursed himself in the morning because a bad night at poker the last time he was at Honolulu had left him so short of ready money. And if the night before he had been in love with the girl, this morning he was crazy about her.

"See here, Bananas," he said to the mate, "I've got to have that girl. You go and tell the old man I'll bring the cash up to-night and she can get fixed up. I figure we'll be ready to sail at dawn."

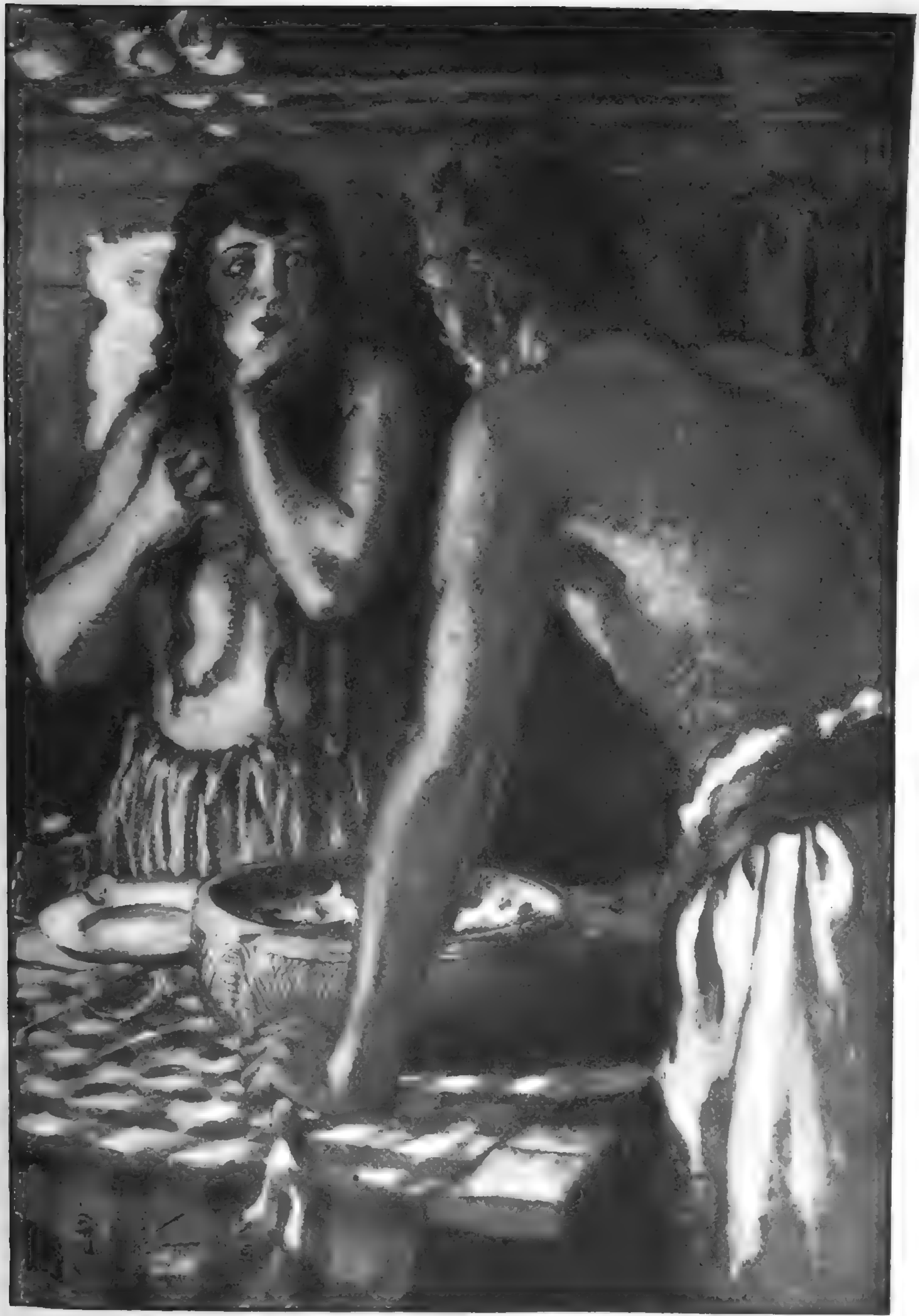
I DO NOT know why the mate was known by that eccentric name. He was called Wheeler, but though he had that English surname there was not a drop of white blood in him. He was a tall man and well made, though inclined to stoutness, but much darker than is usual in Hawaii. He was no longer young, and his crisply curling thick hair was gray. His upper front teeth were cased in gold. He was very proud of them. He had a marked squint, and this gave him a very saturnine expression. The captain, who was fond of a joke, found in it a constant source of humor and hesitated the less to rally him on the defect because he realized that the mate was sensitive about it.

Bananas, unlike most of the natives, was a taciturn fellow, and Captain Butler would have disliked him if it had been possible for a man of his good nature to dislike any one. He liked to be at sea with some one he could talk to, he was a chatty, sociable creature, and it was enough to drive a missionary to drink to live there day after day with a chap who never opened his mouth. He did his best to wake the mate up, that is to say, he chaffed him without mercy, but it was poor fun to laugh by oneself, and he came to the conclusion that, drunk or sober, Bananas was no fit companion for a white man.

He was, however, a good seaman and the captain was shrewd enough to know the value of a mate he could trust. It was not rare for him to come aboard, when they were sailing, fit for nothing but to fall into his bunk, and it was worth something to know that he could stay there till he had slept his liquor off, since Bananas could be relied on. But he was an unsociable devil, and it would be a treat to have some one he could talk to. That girl would be fine. Besides, he wouldn't be so likely to get drunk when he went ashore if he knew there was a little girl waiting for him when he came on board again.

He went to his friend the chandler and over a peg of gin asked him for a loan. There were one or two useful things a ship's captain could do for a ship's chandler, and after a quarter of an hour's conversation in low tones—there is no object in letting all and sundry know your business—the captain crammed a wad of notes in his hip pocket, and that night, when he went back to his ship, the girl went with him.

What Captain Butler, seeking for reasons to do what he had already made up his mind to, had anticipated, actually came to pass. He did not give up drinking, but he ceased to drink to excess. An evening with the boys when he had been away from town two or three weeks was pleasant enough, but it was pleasant, too, to get back to his little girl; he thought of her, sleeping so softly, and how, when he got into his cabin and leaned over her, she would open her eyes lazily and stretch out her arms for him: it was as good as a full hand. He found he was saving money, and since he was a generous man he did the right thing by the little girl: he gave her some silver-backed brushes for her long hair and a gold chain and a reconstructed ruby for her finger. Gee, but it was good to be alive!



Without suspecting anything, Bananas looked full into the water; his face was reflected in it. In a flash she beat upon it violently; the reflection was broken in pieces. Bananas started back with a sudden hoarse cry.

A year went by, a whole year, and he was not tired of her yet. He was not a man who analyzed his feelings, but this was so surprising that it forced itself upon his attention. There must be something very wonderful about that girl. He couldn't help seeing that he was more wrapped up in her than ever, and sometimes the thought entered his mind that it might not be a bad thing if he married her.

Then, one day the mate did not come in to dinner or to tea. Butler did not bother himself about his absence at the first meal, but at the second he asked the Chinese cook:

"Where's the mate? He no come tea?"

"No wantchee," said the Chink.

"He ain't sick?"

"No savvy."

Next day Bananas turned up again, but he was more sullen than ever, and after dinner the captain asked the girl what was the matter with him. She smiled and shrugged her pretty shoulders. She told the captain that Bananas had taken a fancy to her and he was sore because she had told him off.

The captain was a good-humored man and he was not of a jealous nature; it struck him as exceedingly funny that Bananas should be in love. A man who had a squint like that had a precious poor chance. When tea came round he chaffed him gaily. He pretended to speak in the air, so that the mate should not be certain that he knew anything, but he dealt in some pretty shrewd blows.

The girl did not think him as funny as he thought himself, and afterward she begged him to say nothing more. He was surprised at her seriousness. She told him he did not know her people. When their passion was aroused they were capable of anything. She was a little frightened. This was so absurd to him that he laughed heartily.

"If he comes bothering round you, you just threaten to tell me. That'll fix him."

"Better fire him, I think."

"Not on your sweet life. I know a good sailor when I see one. But if he don't leave you alone I'll give him the worst licking he's ever had."

Perhaps the girl had a wisdom unusual in her sex. She knew that it was useless to argue with a man when his mind was made up, for it only increased his stubbornness, and she held her peace. And now on the shabby schooner, threading her way across the silent sea, among those lovely islands, was enacted a dark, tense drama of which the fat little captain remained entirely ignorant. The girl's resistance fired Bananas so that he ceased to be a man, but was simply blind desire. He did not make love to her gently or gaily, but with a black and savage ferocity. Her contempt now was changed to hatred and when he besought her she answered him with bitter, angry taunts. But the struggle went on silently, and when the captain asked her after a little while whether Bananas was bothering her, she lied.

BUT one night, when they were in Honolulu, he came on board only just in time. They were sailing at dawn. Bananas had been ashore, drinking some native spirit, and he was drunk. The captain, rowing up, heard sounds that surprised him, and he scrambled up the ladder. He saw Bananas, beside himself, trying to wrench open the cabin door. He was shouting at the girl. He swore he would kill her if she did not come.

"What in hell are you up to?" cried Butler.

The mate let go the handle, gave the captain a look of savage hate, and without a word turned away.

"Stop here. What are you doing with that door?"

The mate still did not answer. He looked at him with sullen, bootless rage.

"I'll teach you not to pull any of your queer stuff with me, you dirty, cross-eyed nigger," said the captain.

He was a good foot shorter than the mate and no match for him, but he was used to dealing with native crews, and he had his knuckle-duster handy. Perhaps it was not an instrument that a gentleman would use; but then Captain Butler was not a gentleman. Nor was he in the habit of dealing with gentlemen. Before Bananas knew what the captain was at, his right arm had shot out and his fist, with its ring of steel, caught him fair and square on the jaw. He fell like a bull under the pole-ax.

"That'll learn him," said the captain.

Bananas did not stir. The girl unlocked the cabin door and came out.

"Is he dead?"

"He ain't."

He called a couple of men and told them to carry the mate to his bunk. He rubbed his hands with satisfaction and his round blue eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. But the girl was strangely silent. She put her arms round him as though to protect him from invisible harm.

It was two or three days before Bananas was on his feet again, and when he came out of his cabin his face was torn and swollen. Through the darkness of his skin you saw the livid bruise. Butler saw him slinking along the deck and called him. The mate went to him without a word.

"See here, Bananas," he said to him, fixing his spectacles on his slippery nose, for it was very hot, "I ain't going to fire you for this, but you know now that when I hit, I hit hard. Don't forget it and don't let me have any more funny business."

Then he held out his hand and gave the mate that good-humored, flashing smile of his which was his greatest charm. The mate took the outstretched hand and twisted his swollen lips into a devilish grin. The incident in the captain's mind was so completely finished that when the three of them sat at dinner he chaffed Bananas on his appearance. He was eating with difficulty and, his swollen face still more distorted by pain, he looked truly a repulsive object.

That evening, when he was sitting on the upper deck, smoking his pipe, a shiver passed through the captain.

"I don't know what I should be shiverin' for on a night like this," he grumbled. "Maybe I've gotten a dose of fever. I've been feeling a bit queer all day."

When he went to bed, he took some quinin, and next morning he felt better, but a little washed out, as though he were recovering from a debauch.

"I guess my liver's out of order," he said, and he took a pill.

He had not much appetite that day and toward evening he began to feel very unwell. He tried the next remedy he knew, which was to drink two or three hot whiskies; but that did not seem to help him much, and when in the morning he looked at himself in the glass he thought he was not looking quite the thing.

"If I ain't right by the time we get back to Honolulu I'll just give Dr. Denby a call. He'll sure fix me up."

He could not eat. He felt a great lassitude in all his limbs. He slept soundly enough, but he awoke with no sense of refreshment; on the contrary, he felt a peculiar exhaustion. And the energetic little man, who could not bear the thought of lying in bed, had to make an effort to force himself out of his bunk. After a few days he found it impossible to resist the languor that oppressed him, and he made up his mind not to get up.

"Bananas can look after the ship," he said. "He has before now."

He laughed a little to himself as he thought how often he had lain speechless in his bunk after a night with the boys. That was before he had his girl. He smiled at her and pressed her hand. She was puzzled and anxious. He saw that she was concerned about him and tried to reassure her. He had never had a day's illness in his life and in a week at the outside he would be as right as rain.

"I wish you'd fired Bananas," she said. "I've got a feeling that he's at the bottom of this."

"Damned good thing I didn't, or there'd be no one to sail the ship. I know a good sailor when I see one." His blue eyes, rather pale now, with the whites all yellow, twinkled. "You don't think he's trying to poison me, little girl?"

SHE did not answer, but she had one or two talks with the Chinese cook, and she took great care with the captain's food. But he ate little enough now, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that she persuaded him to drink a cup of soup two or three times a day. It was clear that he was very ill, he was losing weight quickly, and his chubby face was pale and drawn. He suffered no pain, but merely grew every day weaker and more languid. He was wasting away. The round trip on this occasion lasted about four weeks and by the time they came to Honolulu the captain was a little anxious about himself. He had not been out of his bed for more than a fortnight and really he felt too weak to get up and go to the doctor. He sent a message asking him to come on board. The doctor examined him, but could find nothing to account for his condition. His temperature was normal.

"See here, Captain," he said, "I'll be perfectly frank with you. I don't know what's the matter with you, and just seeing you like this don't give me a chance. You come into hospital so that we can keep you under observation. There's nothing organically wrong with you, I know that, and my impression is that a few weeks in hospital ought to put you to rights."

"I ain't going to leave my ship."

Chinese owners were queer customers, he said; if he left his ship because he was sick his owner might fire him, and he couldn't afford to lose his job. So long as he stayed where he was his contract safeguarded him, and he had a first-rate mate. Besides, he couldn't leave his girl. No man could want a better nurse; if any one could pull him through she would. Every man had to die once and he only wished to be left in peace. He would not listen to the doctor's expostulations, and finally the doctor gave in.

"I'll write you a prescription," he said doubtfully, "and see if it does you any good. You'd better stay in bed for a while."

"There ain't much fear of my getting up, doc," answered the captain. "I feel as weak as a cat."

But he believed in the doctor's prescription as little as did the doctor himself, and when he was alone amused himself by lighting his cigar with it. He had to get amusement out of something, for his cigar tasted like nothing on earth, and he smoked only to persuade himself that he was not too ill to.

That evening a couple of friends of his, masters of tramp steamers, hearing he was sick, came to see him. They discussed his case over a bottle of whisky and a box of Philippine cigars. One of them remembered how a mate of his had been taken queer just like that and not a doctor in the United States had been able to cure him. He had seen in the paper an advertisement of a patent medicine, and thought there'd be no harm in trying it. That man was as strong as ever he'd been in his life after two bottles. But his illness had given Captain Butler a lucidity which was new and strange, and while they talked he seemed to read their minds. They thought he was dying. And when they left him he was afraid.

THE girl saw his weakness. This was her opportunity. She had been urging him to let a native doctor see him, and he had stoutly refused; but now she entreated him. He listened with harassed eyes. He wavered. It was very funny that the American doctor could not tell what was the matter with him. But he did not want her to think that he had the wind up. If he let a damned nigger come along and look at him, it was to comfort her. He told her to do what she liked.

The native doctor came the next night. The captain was lying alone, half awake and half asleep, and the cabin was dimly lit by a small oil lamp. The door was softly opened and the girl came in on tiptoe. She held the door open and some one slipped in as silently behind her. The captain smiled at this mystery, but he was so weak now the smile was no more than a glimmer in his eyes.

The doctor was a little old man, very thin and very wrinkled, with a completely bald head and the face of a monkey. He was bowed and gnarled like an old tree. He looked hardly human, but his eyes were very bright, and in the half-darkness they seemed to glow with a reddish light. He was dressed filthily in a pair of ragged dungarees, and the upper part of his body was naked. He sat down on his haunches and for ten minutes perhaps looked at the captain. Then he felt the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet. The girl watched him with frightened eyes. No word was spoken. Then he asked for something that the captain had worn. The girl gave him the old felt hat which the captain used constantly, and, taking it, he sat down again on his haunches, clasping it firmly with both hands; and rocking backwards and forward slowly he muttered some gibberish in a very low tone.

At last he gave a little sigh and dropped the hat. He took an old pipe out of his trousers pocket and lit it. The girl went over to him and sat by his side. He whispered something to her, and she started violently. For a few minutes they talked in hurried undertones, and then they stood up. She gave him money and opened the door for him. He slid out as silently as he had come in. Then she went over to the captain and leaned over him so that she could speak into his ear.

"It's an enemy praying you to death."

"Don't talk fool stuff, girlie," he said impatiently.

"It's the truth. It's God's truth. That's why the American doctor couldn't do anything. Our people can do that. I've seen it done. I thought you were safe because you were a white man."

"I haven't an enemy."

"Bananas."

"What's he want to pray me to death for?"

"You ought to have fired him before he had a chance."

"I guess if I ain't got anything more the matter with me than Bananas' hoodoo I shall be sitting up and taking nourishment in a very few days."

She was silent for a while and she looked at him intently.

"Don't you know you're dying?" she said to him at last.

That was what the two skippers had thought, but they hadn't said it. A shiver passed across the captain's wan face.

"The doctor says there ain't nothing really the matter with me. I've only to lie quiet for a bit and I shall be all right."

She put her lips to his ear as if she were afraid that the air itself might hear.

"You're dying, dying, dying. You'll pass out with the old moon."

"That's something to know."

"You'll pass out with the old moon unless Bananas dies before."

He was not a timid man and he had recovered already from the shock of her words, and still more her vehement, silent manner, had given him. Once more a smile flickered in his eyes.

"I guess I'll take my chance, girlie."

"There's twelve days before the new moon."

There was something in her tone that gave him an idea.

"See here, my girl, this is all bunk. I don't believe a word of it. But I don't want you to try any of your monkey tricks with Bananas. He ain't a beauty, but he's a first-rate mate."

He would have said a good deal more, but he was tired out. He suddenly felt very weak and faint. It was always at that hour that he felt worse. He closed his eyes. The girl watched him for a minute and then slipped out of the cabin. The moon, nearly full, made a silver pathway over the dark sea. It shone from an unclouded sky. She looked at it with terror, for she knew that with its death the man she loved would die.

His life was in her hands. She could save him, she alone could save him, but the enemy was cunning, and she must be cunning too. She felt that some one was looking at her, and without turning, by the sudden fear that seized her, knew that from the shadow the burning eyes of the mate were fixed upon her. She did not know what he could do; if he could read her thoughts she was defeated already, and with a desperate effort she emptied her mind of all content.

His death alone could save her lover, and she could bring his death about. She knew that if he could be brought to look into a calabash in which was water so that a reflection of him was made, and the reflection were broken by hurtling the water, he would die as though he had been struck by lightning; for the reflection was his soul. But none knew better than he the danger, and he could be made to look only by a guile which had lulled his least suspicion. He must never think that he had an enemy who was on the watch to cause his destruction. She knew what she had to do; but the time was short, the time was terribly short. Presently she realized that the mate had gone. She breathed more freely.

TWO days later they sailed, and there were ten now before the new moon. Captain Butler was terrible to see. He was nothing but skin and bone, and he could not move without help. He could hardly speak. But she dared do nothing yet. She knew that she must be patient. The mate was cunning, cunning. They went to one of the smaller islands of the group and discharged cargo, and now there were only seven days more.

The moment had come to start. She brought some things out of the cabin she shared with the captain and made them into a bundle. She put the bundle in the deck cabin where she and Bananas ate their meals, and at dinner time, when she went in, he turned quickly and she saw that he had been looking at it. Neither of them spoke, but she knew what he suspected. She was making her preparations to leave the ship. He looked at her mockingly. Gradually, as though to prevent the captain from knowing what she was about, she brought everything she owned into the cabin, and some of the captain's clothes, and made them all into bundles. At last Bananas could keep silence no longer. He pointed to a suit of ducks and asked:

"What are you going to do with that?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I'm going back to my island."

He gave a laugh that distorted his grim face. The captain was dying and she meant to get away with all she could lay hands on.

"What'll you do if I say you can't take those things? They're the captain's."

"They're no use to you," she said.

There was a calabash hanging on the wall. It was the very calabash I had seen when I came into the cabin and which we had talked about. She took it down. It was all dusty, so she poured water into it from the water bottle, and rinsed it with her fingers.

"What are you doing with that?"

"I can sell it for fifty dollars," she said.

"If you want it, you'll have to pay me."

"What d'you want?"

"You know what I want."

She allowed a fleeting smile to play on her lips. She flashed a quick look at him and quickly turned away. With a savage bound he sprang upon her and seized her in his arms. Then she laughed. She put her arms, her soft round arms, about his neck.

He told her that the captain could not last more than a day or two, and the owner wouldn't so easily find another white man to command the ship. If Bananas offered to take less money, he would get the job and the girl could stay with him.

He looked at her with love-sick eyes. She nestled up against him. She kissed his lips and she promised to stay. Bananas was drunk with happiness.

It was now or never.

She went to the table to arrange her hair. There was no mirror and she looked into the calabash, seeking for her reflection. Then she beckoned to Bananas to come to her. She pointed to the calabash.

"There's something in the bottom of it."

Instinctively, without suspecting anything, Bananas looked full into the water. His face was reflected in it. In a flash she beat upon it violently, with both her hands, so that they pounded on the bottom and the water splashed up. The reflection was broken in pieces.

Bananas started back with a sudden hoarse cry and he looked at the girl. She was standing there with a look of triumphant hatred on her face. A horror came into his eyes. His heavy features were twisted in agony, and with a thud, as though he had taken a violent poison, he crumpled up on to the floor. A great shudder passed through his body and he was still. She leaned over him callously. She put her hands on his heart and then she pulled down his lower eyelid. He was quite dead.

She went into the cabin in which lay Captain Butler. There was a faint color in his cheeks and he looked at her in a startled way.

"What's happened?" he whispered.

They were the first words he had spoken for forty-eight hours.

"Nothing's happened," she said.

"I feel all funny."

Then his eyes closed and he fell asleep. He slept for a day and a night, and when he awoke he asked for food. In a fortnight he was well.

IT WAS past midnight when Winter and I rowed back to shore and we had drunk innumerable whiskies and sodas.

"What do you think of it all?" asked Winter.

"What a question! If you mean have I any explanation to suggest, I haven't."

"The captain believes every word of it."

"That's obvious; but you know that's not the part that interests me most, whether it's true or not, and what it all means; the part that interests me most is that such things should happen to such people. I wonder what there is in that extraordinary commonplace little man to arouse such a passion in that lovely creature. As I watched her, asleep there, while he was telling the story I had some fantastic idea about the power of love being able to work miracles."

"But that's not the girl," said Winter.

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Didn't you notice the cook?"

"Of course I did. He's the ugliest man I've ever seen."

"That's why Butler took him. The girl ran away with the Chinese cook last year. This is a new one. He's only had her there about two months."

"Well, I'm hanged!"

"He thinks this cook is safe. But I wouldn't be too sure in his place. There's something about a Chink; when he lays himself out to please a woman she can't resist him."

"Well, well!"

The Pinto Stallion

A Situation That Belongs in the Red-Blooded West, a Tense Drama Revolving Around a Wild-Horse Hunt Which is Just as Serious and as Thrilling as Any Man-Hunt of Fact or Fiction

By Honoré Willsie

Author of "Desert Justice," The Enchanted Cañon," etc."

Illustrations by Paul V. E. Ivory

WILD-HORSE country must of necessity be remote country. It must be adjacent to cow country. And it must be watered and grassed, but not sufficiently to tempt either cattleman or sheep-herder.

Such a country is the stamping-ground of the pinto stallion.

Picture to yourself a far range of the Rockies, lifting for a hundred miles or so from the valley of the railroad at four thousand feet elevation, hill on hill, cañon beyond cañon, peak above peak to ultimate, snow-crowned crests at fourteen thousand feet. Many of the lower valleys are unwatered and profoundly alkaline. Even the sage-brush and the cactus are half-starved. But the upper valleys for five months of the year are watered by melted snows. The wild grass is thick, and alfalfa, if the melted snows are impounded and fed to it, grows amazingly. This is cow country, and has been for three generations.

Between the arid valleys and the cow valleys lies country that is neither fish nor flesh, and here run horses that have escaped from the upper ranches and in small, stallion-led herds thrive mightily on the sparse grass and sparser water.

Horse-flesh is held cheap in the upper valleys. It is a poor rancher indeed who has not a dozen or so mounts running in the fields. So the wild horses are not tempting except to the venturesome. The running of these untamed herds is dangerous and to be undertaken only by men of extraordinary prowess as riders and ropers. But for the young bloods who find the round-up tame, the running of wild horses offers excitement worth their mettle. Above all is it a real man's game to go out after the pinto stallion.

Not more than a dozen of the young riders of the upper valleys ever have seen him. Not more than a half-dozen have got near enough to him to flatter themselves that they are running him. And only four or five of them dare boast that they have flung a rope at him. Homer Freeman knew the stallion better than any one in the Lone Bend country. But then Homer, even at thirty or so, was a better range man than any of the young dare-devils who dreamed of bronco-busting at Cheyenne's Frontier Day. Particularly was Homer a master runner of wild horses.

Homer played a lone game. Just why, no one in Lone Bend could discover. His grandfather had ridden range in the Lone Bend country. His father had made money enough on his cattle-ranch to send Homer East to college and to make a lawyer of the boy. But at his father's death Homer had come back to live a solitary life at the old ranch-house. He spent two-thirds of his time hunting bear, lynx, wolverene or what-not on the Forest Reserve and running wild horses in the lower valleys. It was said that he was not above shifting a brand or two and that in common with other Lone Benders he seldom beefed his own steers.

But excepting those occasions when he helped Frank Peters put through some wild and mysterious horse deal, Homer played a lone hand, and with few exceptions, when he hunted, he hunted alone.

Aunty Ames, who laid out all the dead and delivered all the babies in Lone Bend, tended Homer when he had the influenza. She claimed that during his delirium she found him with his cheek pillowed on the photograph of a very lovely woman and that there were undried tears on his face. But no one in Lone Bend dared taunt Homer with this.

Homer discovered the pinto stallion. He was returning from hunting sage-hens and had a haunch of antelope venison in a gunny-sack slung across his saddle. He had no desire to meet a forest ranger and was riding through the trailless country far to the east of Lone Bend. Rounding a mesa's blunt nose, he came upon a beautiful stallion, strongly Arabian, who snorted and disappeared so suddenly that Homer rubbed his eyes.

FROM that moment Homer dreamed of capturing that magnificent stallion. Again and again he went after him, always to return empty-handed and with increased admiration for the cleverness of the wild creature. Gradually he developed a certain affection and proprietary pride in the pinto, and when others in the valley began to hunt him Homer resented it.

Yet it was out of this pride that there grew, finally, Homer's grudging consent to take Frank Peters on a hunt after the stallion. Frank was skeptical as to the stallion's beauty and as to Homer's ability to locate him at will. At last Homer grudgingly consented to Frank's accompanying him and even to Frank's bringing along young Billy Williams the Peters foreman. Yet from month to month he delayed the expedition, pleading now that the heat was too great, now that the snows were too deep.

But one day in early February the forest ranger, who had ridden cross-country from his own station to his neighbor's, fifty miles east, stopped at Lone Bend post-office to thaw out and feed. He reported the drifts as deep and difficult as far south as the Crooked Wash. But there the snow had blown clear of the mesa and there the ranger swore he had seen the pinto stallion with his herd of mares.

A day or so later Homer, Frank and Billy, with pack outfit and each an extra saddle-horse, started at sun-up for the Crooked Wash country.

The three riders jingled out of Peters's corral at the cowman's slow trot.

"Must 'ave six inches of snow fell last night," said Billy. "Who breaks trail?"

"I'll take it on till we reach Crooked Bend Cañon," Frank replied, "then you'll have to lead, Homer. I ain't been up that way in the wintertime in ten years."

Homer nodded and pulled in his horse Theodore after Frank's mare. Homer sat taller in the saddle than either of the other two. He was perhaps thirty, with gray eyes that would have been abstracted had they not been so keen, with a thin mouth that would have been sensitive had it not been set in lines of deliberate immobility. He wore dilapidated Angora chaps of about the same vintage as Frank's, a belt-length leather coat, a Stetson pulled low over the black silk cap that covered his ears, and high-heeled riding-boots.

Frank's outfit duplicated Homer's, but there any likeness between the two men ceased. Frank was about thirty-five, ruddy of face and thick of body where Homer was thin and dark with tan.

Billy was a tall jack-knife youngster with a soft girlish face, not looking his twenty-five years. He was resplendent in leather chaps that were studded with silver and heavily embossed in a design of roses.

The trail led over a low shoulder of Black Mountain, across Lone Bend Creek, gingerly about the shoulder of Agate Mountain, up ten miles or so of sun-lit valley into Crooked Wash Cañon whose multi-colored walls closed in on them rapidly and steeply. They made night camp under a jutting ledge of bright yellow-and-green sandstone and were in the saddle again at dawn, Homer leading, the horses belly-deep in snow. For several hours thus, with no conversation, then Homer turned in his saddle.

"We're only about an hour now from the foot of old Red Mountain," he called. "This is the last firewood we'll see till night-time."

The comment of the other two was to dismount and tie their horses in the clump of cedars that here filled the cañon from edge to edge. There was no snow under the trees and soon a good fire was going and Billy was frying pork.

He dished the dinner and the three squatted around the fire to eat it.

"My idea is," said Homer, "that instead of going up on the mesa this afternoon we climb the back of old Red, here, and work round where we can get a clean view of the mesa top. Make camp there and in the morning locate the pinto with the field-glasses. If we go up on the mesa before we locate him, he'll just make goats of us again."

"There's going to be a fierce wind blowing up on old Red," suggested Billy.

The older men merely stared at him and Billy, swearing softly, lighted a cigaret and helped to pack up without further protest.

A brisk wind had risen. They began to feel some of its force when they left the cedars. It was a gale when Homer led the way around a pink sandstone cliff to the foot of old Red, which, treeless and trailless, offered them rough passage. Homer urged Theodore slantwise up the first snowy slope and the others followed. On the crest of the third steep shoulder Theodore stopped, head down, and obstinately struggled to turn back. The wind was full of snow. Homer shouted something that the others could not hear above the gale; but when he dismounted and began to lead his horse they followed suit. To the fourth shoulder was a bitter, blinding fight, snow to the waist, a wind that one could not face. At the top of the fourth crest Homer waited for the others to come up.

"It's gawd-awful steep to swing round this shoulder," he shouted, jerking his head toward the sickening depths below and beyond; "but I think we'd better try it rather than straight up. The horses will begin to act in the wind up there."

Billy and Frank nodded and Homer went on corkscrewing up the edge of the abyss that gaped below them until at sunset, just under the summit of the mountain, he led the panting and exhausted outfit into a rough, shallow cave in a mighty, crimson rock-heap. Here there was no wind and little snow.

For a few moments speech was impossible to the panting hunters. Homer recovered first and, shielding his eyes from the last rays of the sun, he swept the astounding landscape with his field-glasses. Immediately below him was the Crooked Wash mesa, in reality a flat-topped mountain, corrugated by many cañons. The mesa was a soft rose tint, the cañon wall, for the most part, brilliant yellow. Beyond the mesa lifted a snow-covered range, pastel blue; and beyond this range, another and a higher, white, shot with cardinal; and beyond this still another, black where it was not gold; all twisting and swirling in the mighty wind-storm.

Homer viewed the horizon only casually, then lowered the glasses to the mesa. The others watched him eagerly; but it was not until a quarter of an hour had passed that Homer spoke.

"THAT ranger sure is not as big a liar as I thought he was."

"Where are they?" exclaimed Frank.

Homer gave him the glasses. "Locate the cañon in the center of the mesa. Stop where it opens into the main wash. Follow down directly under the rim."

"I don't need the glasses!" cried Billy, following Homer's directions. And indeed, now that one knew where to look, a little group of horses was distinguishable in the cañon indicated.

"Here, hawkeye!" Frank laughed excitedly as he handed the glasses to Billy. "See if you can make out the pinto. I can't."

"I saw him," said Homer.

"Sure, he's there! I see him!" shouted Billy. "I see him. Now I'll show those dogies at Lone Bend whether or not I can run a real wild horse!"

"Not but what you've been running them ever since you put on pants," grunted Frank. "Come on, boys, let's make camp before it gets dark."

The cave was large and the horses were driven into one end and given their oats.

"Your horses getting anything but hay this winter, Frank?" asked Homer as he unsaddled Theodore.

"No," replied Frank. "I never was a hand to nurse-bottle a horse like you."

Homer smiled and said nothing, but Billy looked keenly from the well-padded Theodore and Marie, his mate, to his own and Frank's mounts.

"Back East," said Homer, "they don't know how to ride, but they sure know how to treat horse-flesh."

"Never came any Easterner out here that knew whether horses ate hay or beefsteak," growled Frank. Then he added with a grin: "You might have been a real cowman, Homer, if your father hadn't sent you to college."

"Spoiled a good horse-wrangler to make a dogy lawyer!" laughed Billy.

"He wasn't so much of a dogy the time he put over the plea of self-defense when you shot Carl Atkins," said Frank. "You better wrangle some firewood, Billy, and don't try to sass your elders."

Billy went out to attack the scrub cedar below the cave and little more was said until the evening meal had been cooked and eaten. Even then there was the silence that comes less from friendship than from life-long acquaintance. Frank and Billy, at least, knew each others' minds as they knew their own and had lost interest. They had no hope of knowing Homer's, who sat pulling at his pipe and staring at the fire long after the others had gone to bed.

THE morning dawned clear and brilliant with the pinto's band moving slowly along the rim of the cañon far, far below. The hunters left the extra horses in the camp and worked their difficult way down the mountainside, across the wild, rocky valley and up the steep yellow wall of the mesa.

"Now," said Homer, "I'll sneak up on them till they start running. Then I'll try to cut out the pinto. When I do, I'll try to head him back toward this drift and we'll see if we can gaum him in it. Billy, you work up yonder to the left and keep going easy till you see me coming. Then be prepared to ride herd as you never did before. Frank, you patrol this end of the mesa and don't get impatient."

Homer dismounted, looked carefully to his girth, recoiled his lariat, pulled his hat farther down over his ears, vaulted into the saddle and was off. The top of the mesa was covered with fine broken stone and dotted with sage-brush around which grew thick clumps of dried grass. The going would not have been difficult for a horse of Theodore's strength and experience had not the entire tableland been cross-hatched by crevice and draw. Traversing these at a run was heart-breaking work. For a long hour they sneaked up and down cañon and draw until they emerged from the main cañon not a hundred yards from where the wild herd was grazing.

For a moment Homer held Theodore in while, with the familiar quickening of his heart, he once more gazed on the pinto stallion. He was grazing with his flank to the enemy. A bay mare close behind him threw up her head with a loud snort. The pinto turned. He stood perhaps sixteen hands high, with face and mane creamy white, a wild heavy forelock blowing across his burning dark eyes. His legs were straight and slender and mottled with roan, as was his mighty chest and back. He gave Homer a quick, casual glance, wheeled on his hind legs as Homer plunged his spurs into Theodore, and headed due north, his herd following helter-skelter.

It was vicious going from the very start. Now leaping a draw, now dropping into a cañon, now sliding, all fours stiff, into an unexpected wash, now flying up a narrow isthmus of land, broken stone scattering, hoofs thudding. Several brood-mares quit the race after a few moments, shying off into sheltered cañons where, trembling and panting, they watched the chase disappear into the beyond. It was not easy to cut the pinto from the entire band; but after an hour or so only the big bay mare remained, running easily with her nose to her lord's flank. She was not so deft as the pinto in doubling. Now and again the pinto waited a breath for her to follow his tactics. Theodore was quick to take advantage of these pauses and gradually he drew within roping distance.

The pinto was heading into a blind draw as Homer unslung his lariat. There was heavy snow along the bottom, but the three horses scarcely slackened speed. The pinto backed the mare against the blind wall and stood before her, great sides heaving, great eyes flaming, great chest covered with foam and frosting sweat. Homer twirled the rope. The coil shot forward. The stallion, with a scream, reared, bared his teeth and jumping over the loop as it slid toward his fore feet, he charged Theodore and his rider like a maddened bull. His wet shoulder caught Theodore's, his teeth tore one of the chaps from Homer's belt, one hoof grazed Theodore's flank and slit it for six inches. Theodore fell heavily under the charge, and the pinto and the mare thundered over him and were gone.

Homer cleared his feet from the stirrups as they went down and mounted as

Theodore rose, which was wise, for the horse was beyond control and bolted savagely after the pinto. Theodore was quite as keen a hunter as was his master.

It was noon when again they began to overhaul the pinto and the bay mare. Little by little Homer had managed to turn the hunt southward, and finally he descried on the rose-flecked floor of the mesa a black dot which told him that Billy was drawing near. The bay mare was tired now. In a straight race Theodore easily could have bested her. But the pinto was using his own and his mate's goat-like agility at scaling cañon and draw to keep them out of roping distance. Theodore, handicapped by a load, found it difficult to press this kind of a chase, but he asked no quarter. And just as Billy came within hail he scrambled out of a draw almost at roping distance. Beyond the draw was a cañon. Into this the pinto leaped, while the mare stood hesitating on the edge. Homer struck the bloody spurs into Theodore. The pinto appeared, covered with snow, on the opposite side of the cañon and stood there nickering at the mare.

THERE was a transverse draw running from the south into the cañon and this separated the pinto from Billy, who now galloped up.

"You can't cross either of these here!" he shouted. "Too much snow! Rope the mare!"

"Wait a minute! Let's see what they do. I can get her any time I want to!"

The pinto nickered again. The bay replied pitifully. And deliberately the stallion plunged back into the cañon. It was drifted to within six feet of the top with snow. At the point of the pinto's crossing the thick-set tops of pines protruded. It was these that made his crossing possible. Neither Homer nor Billy dared risk their mounts in such a trap.

"He sure's gawd's going back for her!" roared Billy. "Rope her quick, Homer!"

Homer twirled his rope. It hit the lunging mare's left hind leg. She kicked viciously and plunged into the depths below. Horses hate snow. Any but a wild horse, bred to the drifts, would have wallowed to his death in such a smother as this. But the two below rolled and groaned, beat the drifts with their hoofs and at last, with unthinkable effort, stood trembling on a ledge under the wall opposite Homer.

Homer, sitting alertly on his panting mount, had watched the struggle with curious intentness. And when the mare had dragged her weary legs up on to the ledge after the stallion, he swore softly to himself.

"Now, you got 'em!" roared Billy. "I can't reach him from here. Rope him, Homer! Rope him!"

"Oh, give him a fighting chance!" replied Homer. "He would have been safe if he hadn't come back after his woman."

"Chance nothing!" cried Billy. "Don't talk like a fool! Quick now! He will be out of there in a moment."

"Wait till he reaches the rim," replied Homer grimly.

"What do you mean, you ——!" Billy began to curse wildly. "Do you think that pinto's yours? Do you think just because you call yourself the best wild-horse runner in Lone Bend you can make a monkey out of me and Frank? You horse-thieving, cattle-running, maverick lawyer, you! I'll get that pinto!" and Billy pulled his saddle-gun.

Homer's six-shooter rested easily on his pommel. "If you fire at the pinto, I'll just have to take a pot shot at you," he said with his familiar grin. "Kids with bad tempers have no business running horses anyhow. The pinto's a gentleman and a sport and I don't aim to allow any but sports really to hunt him."

For a moment there was silence, then sullenly Billy slid his gun back into its holster. Theodore whinnied and the pinto leaped from clinging sage-brush to jutting rock, the mare following him. At the rim both of them stood trembling, nose to nose.

Billy started off at a gallop and at his first movement the wild horses moved slowly eastward. Homer waited until he saw Billy race between the main cañon and the pinto, then he turned the weary Theodore to the west and finally made the crossing at the far edge of the mesa.

It was late in the afternoon and a biting wind rising when Homer on the stiffly trotting Theodore met Frank patrolling the drift in which the pinto was long overdue.

"Well," cried Frank, "ain't you even got a broken-down, mangy mare for me, to console me for freezing all day?"

Homer shook his head. "Billy's been on

the job three hours. I haven't been able to find him since I crossed the big cañon. Thought he'd be down here by now."

"Haven't laid eyes on him. Led you the usual pace, I see. You didn't give Theodore enough oats, Homer!"

Homer grinned ruefully. "We're both all in. Here comes Billy now."

Billy trotted up dejectedly. "Followed 'em for two hours. Got 'em into a blind draw and lost 'em. I hope he's dead the ——" and Billy cursed with enthusiasm.

"Oh, dry up, Billy. We'll chaw it over after we've had some grub. It makes my teeth ache to talk in the wind."

THEY reached the camp at dusk, did the chores and ate the meal in silence. Then Homer, rolling a cigaret before the fire, said:

"There's a bay mare running with the pinto that looks as if she might be part Hambletonian. And a blue roan gelding that's well bred, too. The mare is the best range horse, next to the pinto, that I've ever seen."

"We sure ought to get those, even if we miss out on the pinto," exclaimed Frank.

"We'd had the mare and the pinto, too, if Homer hadn't played the fool!" Billy told the episode which still rankled.

Frank glared at Homer resentfully. "Sometimes I wonder, Homer, whether your wind is broke or if you're just plain ornery. Look here, did you bring us out here just to make monkeys of us?"

"Now don't you talk like a chucklehead, too!" exclaimed Homer.

"Well, what was the idea?" demanded Frank, his voice rising with his resentment.

"If you don't see, it's not up to me to explain," returned Homer.

"Why ain't it? We come out here on a hunt and you go soft on us. You got the best mount and know the business best, so we have to rely on you. But if you just ain't going to get the pinto anyhow, we might as well quit now."

Homer sat staring at the fire, the other two watching him with angry eyes. Frank went on:

"What's the use of trying to pull this gentleman stuff on us, Homer? We've knowed you too long." Frank's voice thickened with indignation as if old grievances were rising as he spoke. "What's the matter with you, anyhow? What's been the matter with you for years? If you don't like Lone Bend, why don't you go up to Indian Arrow or some other good town and be a honest-to-gawd lawyer instead of a cowman without any guts? You used to be a sure enough man, before you went to college. I suppose you fell in love with some wench back there that wouldn't wipe her feet on you and you let it ruin you!"

Homer's thin face went suddenly hard and cold. "That'll be enough, Frank!"

"It ain't enough! I been waiting for years to get this all off my chest to you. I ain't saying you haven't helped me to put over some awful pretty deals and I ain't saying that you and your knowledge of law ain't pulled me out of some hard scrapes. But I never know where I stand with you. Every little while you pull some soft trick on me."

"Like thrashing you the time I saw you kick your wife," said Homer suddenly.

There was a pause while Frank's face twisted with temper. "Yes, damn you," he grunted finally. "I've never felt the same toward you since and I'll get even with you yet. You went back East for your woman-ing, so I can't tell——"

"Cut that, Frank!"

"I'll not, you ——"

As the impossible epithet crossed Frank's lips, Homer drew his six-shooter.

"Eat that, or I'll shoot it down your throat," snarled the younger man.

Frank's own gun gleamed.

"Here, are you fellows going crazy!" exclaimed Billy.

"Eat it!" growled Homer.

"I'll eat it, but I'll get you yet, you dogy lawyer!"

Again there was silence. Homer rolled another cigaret. "I don't want to quarrel with you, Frank," he said finally. "I'm not sore at the Lone Bend country. I'm sore at myself for being too fond of Lone Bend and—what Lone Bend stands for."

"Get out then!" sneered Frank.

"I don't want to get out. That's my trouble. I ought to get out and I don't want to. If I just had the nerve that pinto has, to run the race come high, come low—I sure do respect that horse! He's a man, he is! Listen!" with sudden inspiration. "I'll make a bargain with you!"

"Why ought you to get out?" insisted

Frank. "I don't care about your bargain. I want to know what's eating you."

"Running other folks' horses and slicks down into Utah is what's the matter with me," said Homer shortly. "I'm sick of it. The day for that stuff is gone. This cow country is getting civilized. We've got law now and it's up to us fellows whose fathers took the range from the Indians to show we're a little better than the Indians. And as long as I feel that way I ought to get out."

"You sure ought," sneered Billy. "What's hindering you?"

"Hindering me? Why, the pinto stallion's hindering me!" Then in answer to his companion's bewildered stares, "I mean that a hunt like the one we've had to-day means more to me than a dozen successfully fought legal battles. The big country's bitten me as it bit my father and my grandfather, but I guess there are finer things—" He paused with a sigh so deep that in a gentler man it might have resembled a sob.

"And the woman wouldn't come out here with you, I suppose," grunted Frank.

Homer's lips tightened, but after a pause he laughed. "By heck, let's put it up to the pinto! To-morrow we'll give him another chase. If we catch him, I'll stay here and go into the real cattle business. If he gets away, I'll quit Lone Bend and go in for the law."

Frank and Billy turned this proposition over, puffing slowly at their cigarets.

"I just as soon," said Billy.

"You'll run him fair? No easing of him off?" asked Frank.

"I'll run him till the Marie horse quits on me!" replied Homer.

"I'll take you up!" Frank rose and stretched himself. "If I don't go to bed, I'll freeze to death."

IT WAS noon the next day before they located the pinto and his herd, feeding in a draw at the extreme north end of the mesa. This time there was to be no relaying. They planned to cut him out and ride him till either he or they were ridden out. They cut him from the herd and even from the bay mare, who was stiff and lame. And then at a terrific pace the chase spread far and wide over the mesa. Early in the afternoon Frank, who had been circling to the west, roared: "Here! He's run into this blind cañon!"

Homer and, a few minutes later, Billy galloped up. They drew rein before the narrow entrance to a cañon which opened at right-angles to the wide draw along which they all had followed the stallion.

"Let me rope him!" pleaded Billy.

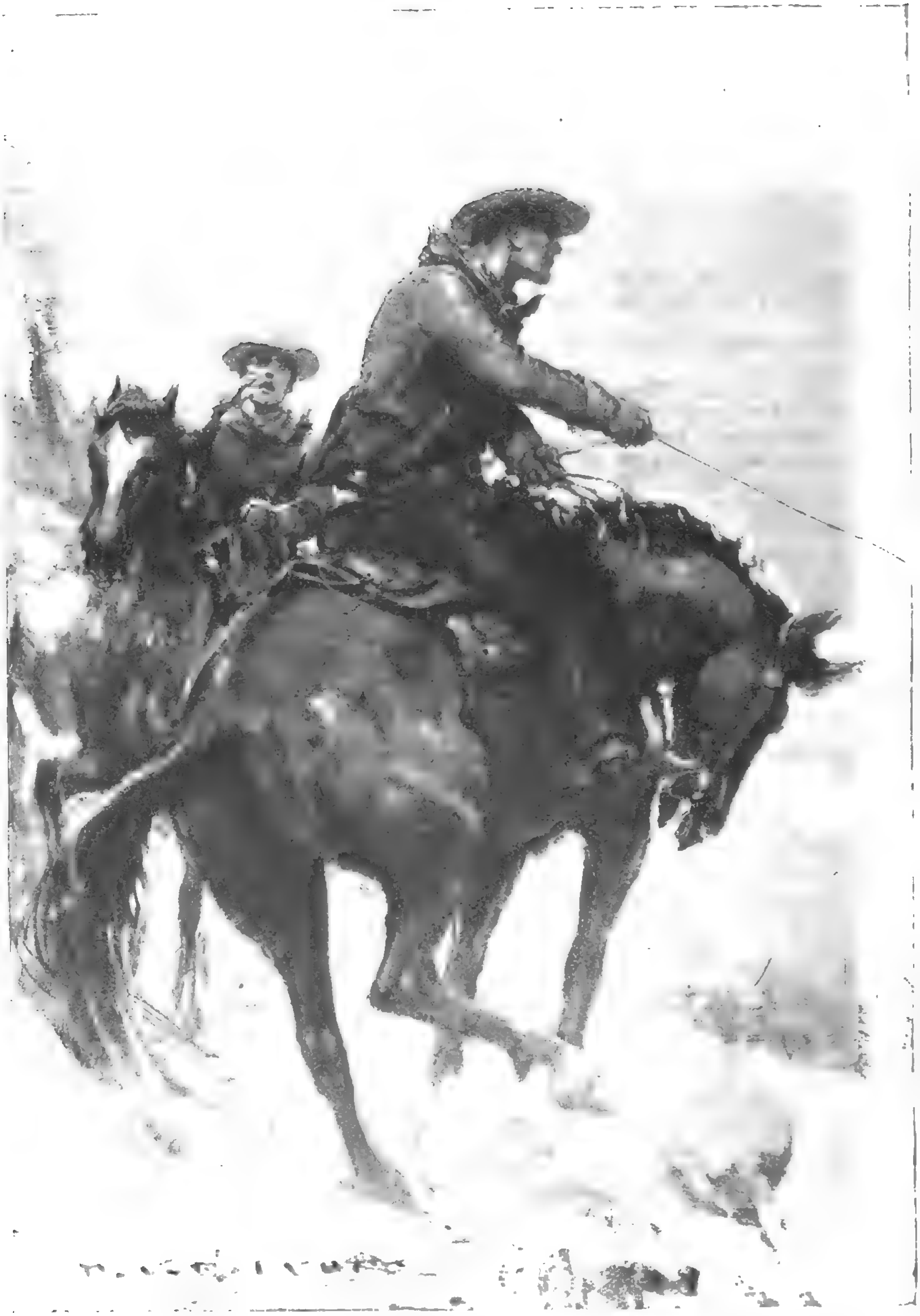
"It'll take two in there and one to guard this entrance," said Homer. "I'll stay here. You two go in, but remember you've got a fight on your hands."

He followed the others in only far enough to get a clear view of the scene. Bright yellow walls rose sheer on three sides. The floor was belly deep with snow. Milling from wall to wall at the far end was the pinto, tail up, mane flying, steam shooting from his flaring nostrils. Blood followed the wallowing trail of Billy and Frank, for the spurs had to bite deep. They were not fifty feet from the pinto when Billy's horse fell over a hidden rock and rolled in a drift that covered both horse and rider.

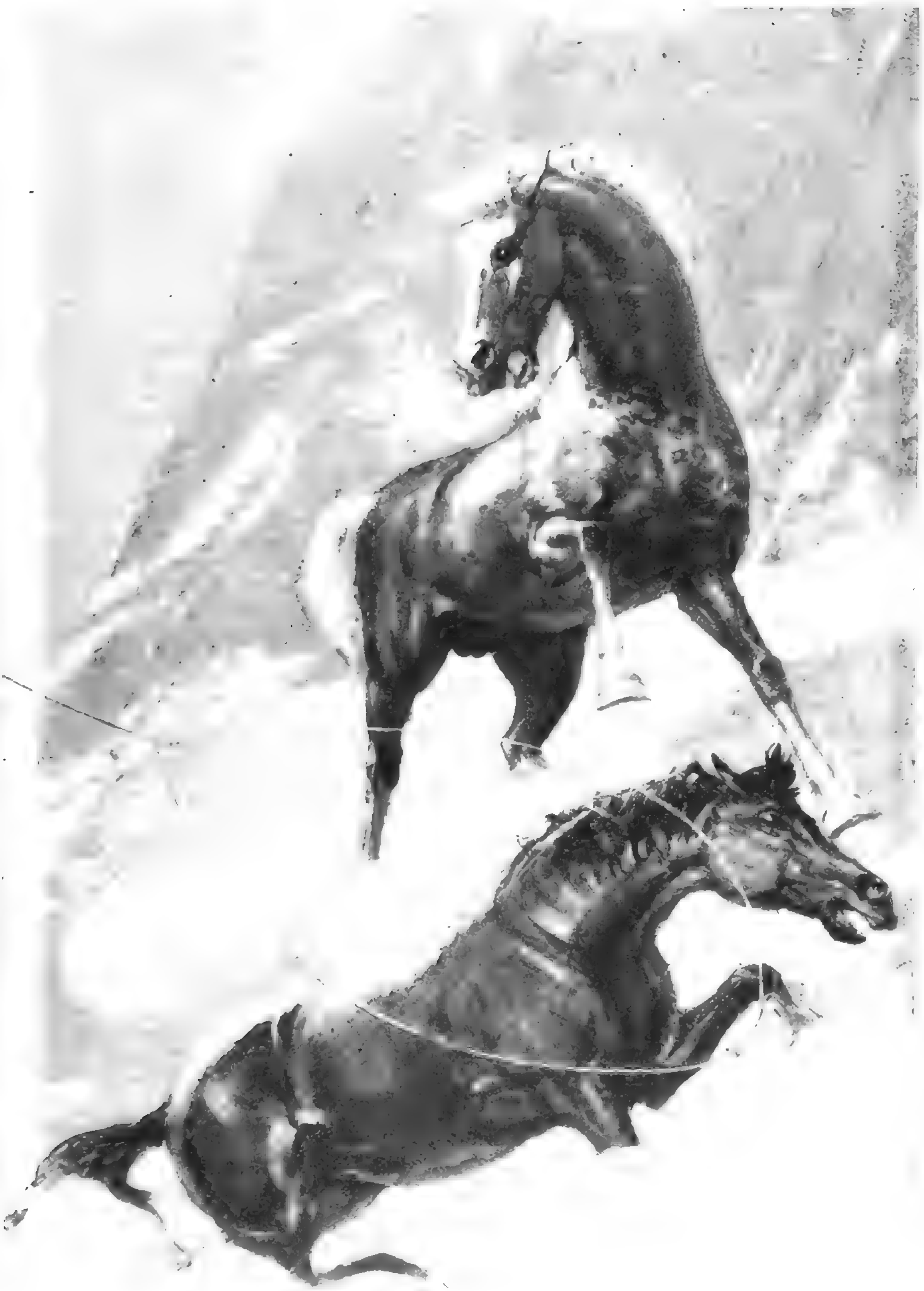
At that instant the stallion, squealing like a wild boar, rushed to the attack. He leaped through the wallowing, kicking, cursing maelstrom that lay between him and Frank, dodged Frank's rope, reared and with bared teeth caught Frank's arm. At the same time he struck the rancher's horse with hoofs that made a sound of impact like a sledge on frozen earth. Frank kicked, cursed and as his horse went over, he shot at the pinto with his six-shooter in his left hand. The bullet went wild, but the stallion freed Frank's arm and stormed on to meet Homer, who twirled his rope steadily. But the Marie horse, seasoned cow-pony as she was, had her limitations. She squealed and lunged to one side. The loop slid off the pinto's ears and Homer jumped into a drift just in time to miss the attack. But the stallion was content to see Marie with her four hoofs kicking at the heavens. He disappeared down the draw.

It was a sorry trio that foregathered at the cañon mouth. Billy had a badly twisted knee and a horse whose nerves were gone. Frank's leather jacket was minus the right sleeve and his bare arm was bloody from the slow stream that oozed from two blue-edged holes in his triceps. Homer was uninjured, but the Marie horse had a lame shoulder.

"You can do you as you please," panted



"Oh, give him a fighting chance," replied Homer. "He



would have been safe if he hadn't come back after his woman."

Frank. "I've had enough. Only I warn you I'll shoot him if I ever get near enough again."

"That's me, too!" Billy scooped a handful of snow from beneath his shirt collar.

"Looks as if we'd have to quit for a while, anyhow," said Homer grimly.

"Let's go back and get the other horses and bring in the bay mare and the blue roan," said Frank. "Here, one of you two knot this handkerchief round my arm." He plastered a quid of tobacco on his wound and stood wincing while Homer tied the bandage.

"Can't count on me!" Homer grinned wryly. "You see, I'm a lawyer now! I'm sure out of luck not to be able to help get that Hambletonian."

"You don't have to turn pure till we get home, do you?" demanded Billy.

"I'm through," said Homer briefly, mounting the very much subdued Marie horse.

The others followed slowly along the draw. "Say," called Billy, "will you loan me Theodore this afternoon?"

"Yes," replied Homer; "but listen. If either of you shoots at that pinto, you'll have me to reckon with; and listen again. I'm playing straight in the cattle and horse business from now on."

So ended the hunt for the pinto stallion. But Frank and Billy had the satisfaction of leading the bay mare and the blue roan gelding into a place of safety in Utah while Homer went home alone.

AND so Lone Bend knew Homer Freeman no more. A Mormon family leased his ranch and Homer went down to the town of Indian Arrow to practise law. The story of Homer's life for the next few years had nothing at all to do with the running of wild horses, though in some ways it was quite as mad and as exciting an adventure as any into which the pinto stallion ever had led him. The story of the cattle country turning civilized and of its better men turning with it is one not to be excelled for drama. But it is enough here to say that Homer was a brilliant and popular lawyer and an honest one, and that when he was elevated to the bench a very few years after leaving Lone Bend his previous history in no way detracted from the Westerners' confidence in him as a just and honorable judge. In fact it only added to their confidence in his ability to administer the law wisely and with keen discrimination. Nor has the story of Homer's struggle with nostalgia for the hunt, for the wide, rose-hued mesas, for the heaven-kissing mountains, for the depth of snows and the far, piercing sadness of the coyotes' wail, a place in this story. We are concerned primarily with the pinto stallion.

A few years ago, perhaps half a dozen years after Homer had left Lone Bend, on a day in January, Billy Williams and a couple of young riders drove a herd of horses into the stock-yards at Indian Arrow. The Great War was raging and horses and yet more horses were needed in France. It was a scraggly bunch of perhaps a hundred brutes picked up off the ranges in bad shape from the heavy winter and from having been driven too hard over the terrible winter trail between Lone Bend and Indian Arrow.

On the evening of that day Oscar Whimpton called at Homer's bachelor quarters. His father and Homer's father had ridden range together. But Oscar had left the upper valley many years before and was ranching in a valley a hundred miles from Lone Bend.

"Hello, Oscar!" said Homer, offering the rancher a cigar. "Aren't you off your trail?"

Oscar settled down with a nod. "Usually take my horses to Frisbie, but that trail's impassable. Say, Homer, about seven years ago I lost a young Hambletonian mare. I always thought a lot of her. she was a wonder on the range. You could ride her to death and not kill her. And she was sired by a stallion my father brought in in the days when you had to hoof it clear from Cheyenne."

"I remember the stallion," said the judge.

"Well," continued Oscar, his heavy snow-burned face set angrily, "I saw that mare to-day."

"You don't mean it! Where?"

"In the stock-yards, in a bunch Peters's men just brought in."

"You must be mistaken! Why, she'd be dead of old age by now!"

"She's exactly twelve years old," retorted Oscar. "She's a little foundered and she's been overworked. Homer, I'll have the law on Peters as sure as there's a God in heaven. I always thought he was a stinkin' brand-shifter, and now I've got the goods on him."

"Are you sure you have? Is Peters up here?"

"No," replied Oscar, "but Billy Williams drove 'em up and he claims he and Peters got her from a herd of wild horses six years ago. He says she was running with a pinto stallion. They sold her to some fellow in Utah as a brood-mare and bought her back again when the fellow said she was no good as a breeder."

"What brand is on her?"

"Peters's, of course!"

"Oscar, I'm afraid you're starting something you'll find it hard to finish. I was with Peters on that hunt and I pointed out the mare to him, running with the pinto stallion. I didn't help get her because right then and there was where I quit the horse-running business."

"Did you see her brand?" demanded Oscar.

"No, I went back to Lone Bend and left them running the herd. But you will have hard work getting anything on Peters. He's devilishly clever, and, after all, who in the old days didn't have a shifted brand in his herd?"

"The old days are gone and I want my mare." Oscar's tone was stubborn. "I hate Peters, anyhow. His first wife was my first sweetheart."

The judge nodded understandingly and for several minutes Oscar smoked furiously, then he began to talk of the last drive on the Western Front.

IT WAS two months after this that the sheriff of Lone Bend County met Homer on the street.

"Good morning, Judge! Well it looks as if you'd have to try your old neighbor."

"What do you mean, Jim? I just got in from Denver last night."

"That's why I'm telling you. Frank Peters has been held for trial for shifting horse brands. Seems like he gathered in a favorite mare of Oscar Whimpton's some years back and Oscar just found it out. He couldn't get him on that, but Oscar's a she bear with cubs when he gets started. He's been getting evidence out at Lone Bend. You know Frank ain't got any friends there and Oscar's sure produced the goods. Looks like Frank's fine underground railway for running other folks' horses and cows into Utah is going to be wrecked."

Homer shook his head. "Too bad if Frank is out of luck. I must get to court, Jim."

And thus came on the trial to which even the Eastern papers gave as much as a stick or two, and which was attended by reporters from the big Seattle and Denver dailies.

Frank had indeed perfected a system of cattle and horse stealing that the prosecuting attorney struggled to prove was only a small part of a greater system countenanced if not protected by a national organization. And try as might both prosecution and defense to keep to the main point, extraneous evidence crept in from every witness—evidence which told of forest rangers who must meet with Frank's approval or be removed, of strangers who showed too great an interest in Frank's ranch being run out of the upper valley, and there was revived even the tale of the death, never explained, of old Sheriff Newman who rode out one day to follow Frank in a trip after a herd that ran with a certain pinto stallion.

When Johnny Farnham was on the stand, the prosecuting attorney again and again ordered him to keep to the point.

"You want to find out what the Lone Benders think of Frank Peters, don't you?" demanded Johnny.

Homer, who throughout the trial had sat arms folded on chest, thin somber face concentrated, spoke quickly:

"Better let him tell it his own way, Mr. District Attorney. You can't hurry a cowman."

Johnny grinned and went on. "One day, a while back, I'd been out on the Reserve hunting a steer of mine and I'd shot a—a willow-grouse, and it was a little out of season for willow-grouse, the first snow having fell and——"

"How many tines on that willow-grouse's horns, Mr. Farnham?" demanded the judge.

A laugh went round the courtroom. Johnny grinned again. "And so instead of riding near where the ranger's cabin was I struck off to the north and landed into Lost Basin. It was awful cold, twenty below, I'll bet, and my horse had ice whiskers and the grouse was stiff like a——"

"Get to the point, please," begged the prosecuting attorney.

"I am! You know, Homer, I mean, Judge, that mighty few folks ever gets into Lost Basin, but I bet you've been there. And you'll remember there's a cave in a big pink wall. The cave gapes open on at the front, and in plain sight is the old iron cot with the corpse of old Bill Edger on it. At least what the coyotes and the weather has left of the corpse. He was shot by a posse for horse-stealing, and they just left him lie where he was.

"Well, corpse or no, I decided I'd go up there and camp for the night. It's a hard place to find after night, and the moon didn't help so much because that country's all pink and yaller and the snow's all blue, and when the moon shines bright on it you get kind of color and trail blind. So I was near froze and in no shape to fight when I finally got into the cave and found, away back in it, Frank Peters and the ranger rebranding a calf."

The jury sat with jaws agape as Frank went on with the details of the fight that ensued. But the judge heard little more. Staring across the crowded room, he saw himself and Theodore weltering slowly through Lost Basin drifts, nostrils sticking at each sharply drawn breath as they followed the trail of a mountain lion. Again he saw the opalescent basin sides, the velvet blue spruce and the lonely bed high up in the wall. Again he saw the brown wolverine leap with a snarl from the bed, missing the snorting Theodore's shoulder by a claw's breadth. Homer, heart-sick with desire, drew a quick breath and forced himself back within hearing of the last of Johnny's evidence.

Frank Peters, watching the judge's face, was not seriously perturbed by the nature of the evidence. He knew, as does any man bred to the ranges, the pull of range life. He was counting on just such evidence as Johnny's causing the judge to see with his old eyes, hear with his old ears. He could then, he knew, hope for leniency.

Arthur Fuller was called by the defense and began his story. "Don't go into that!" fumed Frank's attorney. "That has nothing to do with the case."

"I'm like Johnny Farnham was," drawled Fuller. "I got to go my own gait. I was riding range for Peters. He was awful mad when the State law went through that only standard-bred bulls was to be allowed on the range. He'd give all his riders orders to do what could be done to any bulls we see that belonged to the ranchers who had put the law through. I hadn't any idea of doing it, because I hope to live in Lone Bend a long time. But one day I was riding out to locate a mare that we mistrusted a wild stallion had enticed away."

"What kind of a stallion?" asked his honor suddenly.

"The pinto stallion. You remember him, Judge? Some horse!"

Homer nodded and the witness drawled on. "It was pretty cold, January 'twas, and I was pushing along over Bent Creek way. A blizzard was coming down and I was looking for shelter when I heard a shot and a minute later I came on Peters, who had been hunting with Sheriff Newman. He looked mad and said he'd been shooting at a coyote. We was at the foot of the Reserve at a place where there's a little wild spring always tromped round in snow-time by every kind of track, deer slot and lynx cat and coyote and mountain lion and jack and——"

"For the love of heaven, keep to the shooting!" shouted Frank's attorney.

HOMER did not listen for a time. He knew that spring. In the summer it mirrored in the fathomless blue the delicate cups of the yellow lily. How many times, half-mad with thirst, had he and Theodore rushed to its rim! How many winter nights had he lain in the wild raspberry thicket near by and watched the wild folk of the Reserve creep up to drink, to fight and to kill by its edge!

And Frank Peters, watching the judge's face, smiled grimly.

The last witness called in the trial was a young rider named Dick Cramer who had worked for Frank for a year.

"Just what did you do on the Peters ranch?" asked the prosecutor.

"I rode range in summer, helped with the dehornings and such in the winter. Just all the work on the ranch."

"Just why did you leave?"

"I had a row with Frank." The young man shifted his position and his spurs jingled.

"What about?"

"Well, he was licking his kid pretty hard and I stopped him, and then he said I couldn't go out with him after wild horses. But I threatened to let certain folks know of some slicks I'd seen him brand that wasn't slicks at all, and then he let me go with him. But when we got back, he fired me."

"Yes," said the prosecuting attorney. "And so you went after wild horses with him. Did he really go after wild horses?"

"Sure, he went after whatever might be running with the pinto stallion. Up on Crooked Wash mesa we went and we sure had awful luck. We ran the pinto off the mesa up on to Red Mountain and Frank almost had him when his horse broke a leg in a gopher hole. Frank was so mad he shot the pinto and came home with only one mare. She had the Flying Clover brand on to her. Then——"

The judge suddenly sat forward in his chair. The prosecutor paused as if waiting for the judge's objection or query, but none came, and Cramer's evidence continued. Frank's reliance on what he knew of Homer's characteristics had not been altogether misplaced. It was an extremely difficult position in which to put a man of Homer's history and temperament. Guilty as he knew Frank to be, there tugged at the judge's memory, as if to extenuate his old friend's crime, the wild philosophy of the range. Who knew better than Homer the ease with which the world's codes slip from the man who rides herd? Who knew better than he the ease with which the chase becomes a predatory hunt; of the ease with which the law of the wild becomes the law of the dweller within the wild? Every old instinct within the judge fought on Frank's side—until Cramer gave his evidence!

The young rider finished at noon and that night the case went to the jury. Early the next day the foreman reported a verdict of guilty. Frank drew a quick breath and looked at Homer while his lawyer asked for an appeal, which up to the previous day was what Homer had hoped he would do. But now the judge cleared his throat.

"I shall deny the motion for an appeal. The evidence is clear and final. This State has for the past few years been growing civilized. We who love this State have tried to grow civilized with her, have tried to help in enforcing laws to make this a progressive part of the country for a man to bring up his family in. The old days in which men like the defendant were winked at and admired are gone." The judge paused, looked out of the window, then, with his face working, he turned to the prisoner. "Frank," he said, "you should have quit horse rustling when the rest of us did!" There was another silence, then the judge concluded. "I sentence you to fifteen years in the penitentiary at hard labor." And he rose and went into his chambers.

THAT evening Homer sat in the Elks Club, smoking moodily, when Oscar Whimpton joined him.

"Folks around here feel that justice has been done, Homer. I want to tell you I'm as surprised as I am pleased. I never thought you'd warp it to him as you did."

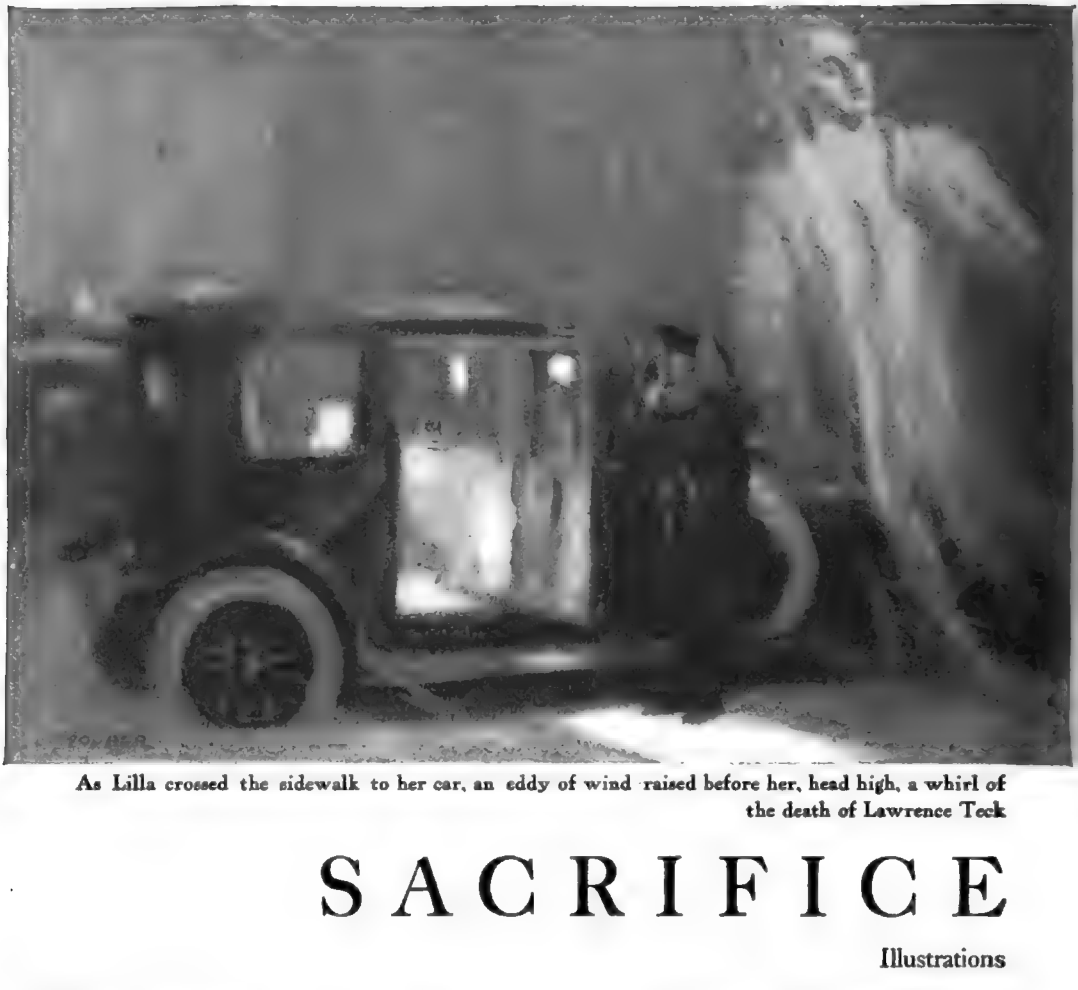
Homer's lips twitched and his voice was furious. "He shouldn't have shot that pinto stallion!"

"But he didn't shoot him! I saw the pinto when I went out to the lower valley last month hunting evidence. Guess he must be twelve years old now, isn't he? But he looks like a four-year-old. I had a good look at him through the glasses. I was talking to Cramer about that to-day. He admits that all he knows positively is that Peters shot at the pinto and that he disappeared, leaving a trail of blood. Well, that evidence was immaterial, anyhow."

Homer stared long at Oscar, some of the old saturnine humor twitching his lips, some of the old sadness in his keen gray eyes. But he said nothing; not even when Oscar added with a deep sigh of satisfaction:

"It's a great thing to have on the bench a man who won't let the past influence his decisions. We sure are, as you say, getting civilized!"

Mrs. Willsie's next story, "Find the Maverick," a strong Western drama, with its ingredient of humor, will appear in November EVERYBODY'S—out October 15.



As Lilla crossed the sidewalk to her car, an eddy of wind raised before her, head high, a whirl of the death of Lawrence Teck

SACRIFICE

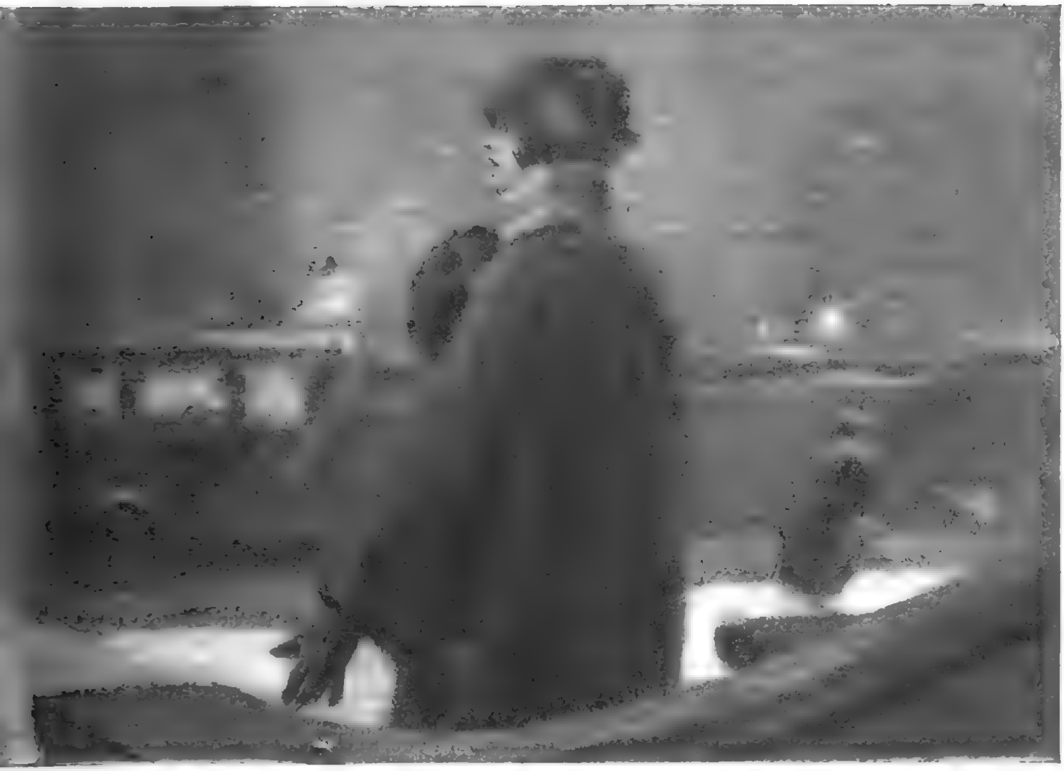
Illustrations

Lilla Sees a Wraith Formed
a Storm, and a Month
Death at the Hands of Sav

THE Dellivers were the sort of people who were always seeking, never finding, always bored. They were what the world calls neurotic. So it was not strange that Lilla, their only daughter, should have developed odd traits; that after her parents had been killed in a railway accident, she should have experienced strange adventures along the road to finding herself.

At first she traveled abroad with Aunt Althea, but this did not cure her restlessness and she returned home. A clairvoyant had told her that there was a great love in store for her. Was it Cornelius Rysbroeck, a lean, neat hypochondriac? He was her most persistent suitor. Or was it Lawrence Teck, an explorer, whose picture Lilla had clipped from a magazine? She bought his books and as she read them there unrolled before her the desert, the strange charm of little known Oriental cities, equatorial forests peopled by human beasts. Sometimes, when late at night she sat gazing at his picture, she would ask him: "Don't you know I exist? I must make you know it."

It wasn't long after her return from Europe that she was a house-party guest at the home of the Brassfields. There she met Rysbroeck, who made the usual proposal which met the usual refusal; there was also present Brantome, a musician whom she knew, and Madame Zadinov a Russian whom she did not know. The Russian was not a professional clairvoyant, but she had



snowflakes that resembled a wraith. A month later the newspapers published a dispatch reporting at the hands of savages

By Stephen French Whitman

by E. Hopper

by Swirling Snowflakes in
Later Lawrence Teck's
ages in Africa is Reported

made a sensation in the select circle in which she moved by predicting things which sometimes came true.

Madame Zadinov told Lilla's fortune; she saw a picture, she said, of black savages around a body, covered with a cloth; she felt that it was some one who had loved Lilla.

Soon after the Russian had finished, Lawrence Teck arrived and Lilla met him. They seemed drawn to each other from the first. Lilla told him of having chosen her ideal without having met him and Teck told her of a friend who had cut a girl's picture from a magazine, of having treasured it through his travels in savage countries, of at last having seen the original flash by in a limousine in New York. Then he admitted that it was he who had done this and not a friend, and that Lilla was the original of the picture.

The courtship lasted only a few hours. Teck had to return to Africa. Lilla expected to go as far as London with him. They dined at a suburban inn and were married in a country village. The next day Lawrence Teck sailed. Lilla had to stay behind, because at the last moment her aunt became seriously ill.

AUNT ALTHEA lay in a four-poster bed near a window through which she might see the sunshine resting on the small Italian garden. Her colorless face was stamped with a look of almost infantile acquiescence, though it was only three days since she had sat out there in the garden, thinking, "When Lilla comes back, I shall ask her whether she wouldn't like a little run over to Rome, before the season sets in."

Lilla, at her first sight of the head on the pillow, felt a tremor of fright. Was it here, too, that dreadful phenomenon?

The sick woman fell asleep. Her hair appeared grayer, her skin more nearly transparent, than ordinarily. All her various ardors had not slipped away from her without leaving on her countenance the marks of their transmutation, a peculiar nobility that owed half its fineness to unacknowledged suffering.

In the night the nurse decided to wake the physician, who was dozing in one of the guest-rooms. Aunt Althea had conquered time, had regained "her beloved Europe." Somewhere in the New York house there was a photograph of her, taken in her twenty-fifth year; she, too, it seemed, had once been charming, full of young grace and eager expectancy. And now she was in her twenty-fifth year again, and driving through Rome to the English cemetery. She reached it. She met some one there, to whom she spoke in Italian. It was a rendezvous of lovers. And Lilla heard the sigh:

"Don't go. Don't smile at my intuition——"

Later, after seeming to listen intently, Aunt Althea cried:

"What are they calling? All massacred at Adowa!" She uttered a moan. "I knew it!"

To the doctor's surprise she lived through the following day. By evening everybody had become hopeful of her recovery. Aunt Althea, turning her faded, aristocratic head on the pillow, said:

"You must go and rest, Lilla. I shall be all right now. How badly you look! How I must have worried you! They shouldn't have spoiled your party. You see it wasn't worth while."

She even asked the nurse to move a candlestick on the mantel-shelf: it was not quite in line with its mate.

She passed away at dawn.

It was a morning of unusual brightness. A high wind caught up and scattered broadcast the petals from the Italian garden, as though that spot had served its only purpose. Now and then a swift cloud cast a shadow over the landscape, then passed on, leaving everything as brilliant as before. The boughs of the trees tapped urgently against the window-panes, calling attention to the sparkling clarity of space. And Lilla, sitting alone in her room, wondered: "Will she meet him out there? Does fate finally relent? Or are those moments that she had with him—so few, while others are allowed so many!—supposed to be enough happiness for her?"

FOR a while Lilla remained in the house on Long Island.

She sat in the pergola holding on her lap a closed book, between the pages of which she kept Lawrence's cablegrams and letters from London. Toward sunset she rose and went down across the meadow to the brook, where some willows leaned over the water. As the twilight gathered, a smell of woodsmoke made her think of camp-fires; and casting a look around her at the suave landscape, she tried to picture the jungle.

Then, when she recalled their brief hours together, a filmy curtain appeared to ascend before her eyes; and that relationship, which because of her profound psychic agitation had been almost dreamlike while it was in progress, assumed a perfect clarity, a new value. And now, with the dissipation of that haze cast over all her senses by his nearness, she perceived him, himself, far more distinctly than when he had been with her. A thousand details of expression, of vocal intonation, of mannerism, of character, all apprehended then by her subjective mind, now rose into her full consciousness to form the perfected picture.

"Ah, what was I thinking of to let him go!"

She felt that another woman, not cursed with her ineptitude in that crisis, would have held him back.

"But you were cruel enough not to give up going of your own accord," she sighed in the twilight. And, turning wearily back toward the house, she reflected that if she had been fatally weak he had been fatally strong, and that, after all, those two antithetical defects were strangely similar.

When she was most gloomy, Fanny Brassfield came to visit her for a few days.

That vigorous blonde woman, ruddy from golf and thin from horseback riding, with calm nerves and an endless fund of gossip, brought a vital thrill into the Long Island house. Yet to Lilla this very vigor was oppressive instead of tonic; and resentment came over her as she scrutinized her friend's satirical face, which seemed to typify all the women who progressed successfully through life, as if their natures, victoriously adamantine, had bestowed upon them this brilliant hardness of complexion, this sophisticated, frosty, conquering glance. Lucky women, who were so emphatically of the same essence as the phenomena round them, who accepted life with the simplicity of natural creatures, who never saw, beneath the pageantry of these appearances, a peeping horror that cast one down from joy to despair! Even death seemed natural to them, apparently, so long as they themselves escaped its touch.

"One must resign oneself to all these things," said Fanny in her clear, loud voice. "One must learn to rise above them. These periods of mourning—don't be shocked—are really a mistake. All this sitting still, dressed in black! One takes medicine when one's sick. A dose of pleasure ought to be the prescription when one's sad."

She added that physical exercise was also very important.

In a striped woolen sports suit, a felt hat turned over one ear and a walking-stick in her hand, Fanny Brassfield presented herself at Lilla's bedside while the garden was still full of mist. She prescribed, on this occasion, a walk before breakfast.

They trudged through by-paths where the bushes were gemmed with dew. From a wooded hilltop they saw, gliding along the highway, the cars of men who were bound for their safe occupations in the city.

Lilla regained the house exhausted, pale from fatigue, while Fanny Brassfield seemed bursting with energy.

In the evening time began to hang rather heavily for Fanny. She persuaded Lilla to play the piano for her; but though she kept a box at the opera she really cared nothing for music. She glanced over the books in which the paragraphs were shortest, ran through a few magazines, kicked off her slippers, put her feet on a stool, lighted a cigaret, and fell back upon gossip. Madame Zanidov was now visiting in Maine. Cornelius Rysbroek had gone to Mexico.

"Mexico! Aren't things rather unsettled there?"

"Perhaps he's gone where things are unsettled because everything is too much settled here," replied Fanny with her satirical smile.

"But Cornie!"

"Oh," said Fanny, luxuriously stretching herself like a cat that needs exercise, "if one of these timid souls is hit hard enough, there's no telling what he'll do."

WHENEVER Lilla received a letter from Lawrence, she tore open the envelope with one movement and pressed against her face those crackling sheets of paper that seemed to exhale the odor of a far-off land. He had written it in the wilds, before his tent, while a naked black messenger stood waiting. The letter sealed, the messenger had stuck it into a split wand, and straightway had set off at a trot toward the coast.

Now she wanted to know precisely what his surroundings looked like. When she had pored over the map, she collected all the books about that region.

She was surprised to find it impregnated with romance.

It was the Eldorado of remote antiquity. Thither, in the dawn of recorded history, had gone the Phœnician galleys full of hook-nosed men in purple and brass, their beards scented with spikenard. From the mining-towns that they built in the jungle, surrounded by cyclopean walls and adorned with grotesque stone images, came the stores of gold with which the Sidonians enriched King Solomon. To-day all those workings were apparently exhausted. The *zimbabwe*—the cities of stone—had crumbled; the jungle had closed in; and in that wilderness only a heap of rubble, or the choked mouth of a pit, remained here and there to mark the source of the metal that had gilded the temple at Jerusalem and the Semitic shrines to Baal and Ashtoreth.

But a new letter told her that he had crossed the Zambesi.

He had gone into a land almost wholly unexplored by its present claimants, full of fever-breeding marshes, barren mountain gorges and great forests. The inhabitants were an unconquered race of warriors called the Mambava, fiercer than the lions and leopards about them, hostile to strangers, and given to uncanny customs. They worshiped among other things—perhaps in consequence of the old Phœnician occupation—the moon. At certain periods of the year their forests thundered with the music of drums; their towns were deserted except for the women and children. Then the stranger who had ventured into their country might see, from his hiding-place, hordes of black men moving to a secret rendezvous, their painted faces framed in monkey-hair, their limbs covered with amulets, their shields rising in time to an interminable chanting in a minor key.

Sometimes, in the corridor outside the door of Lawrence's rooms, she encountered a small, dapper young man with an inquisitive face who lived on the floor above. He usually carried under his arm a leather portfolio. Nothing could have been more interested than his look when he passed this sad-eyed woman in mourning, whose identity and story he had learned from the janitor.

When she had shut the living-room door behind her, for a moment she closed her eyes so as not to see the weapons on the walls. Then she kindled the fire. The blazing logs sent over her a wave of heat; but she shivered while listening to the sound of sleet on the glass.

"He might be here with me. We might have felt together the security and peace of this warm room and laughed at the storm outside."

One evening she ripped from their frames Lawrence's photographs of savages smeared with white paint and crowned with fur and feathers. She threw them into the fire. As the flames consumed them, she leaned forward like those who try to annihilate their enemies by consuming their likenesses.

For a long while she sat beside the empty chair, shading her eyes from the flames with a translucent hand. But of a sudden she stood up, tense and quaking. Her dilated eyes were fixed upon a point in space, from which an overwhelming impression had rushed in upon her—a flood of distant emotion, a sort of voiceless cry, in a flash traversing half the earth and unerringly reaching her.

Little by little her nerves and muscles relaxed. Moving as though her limbs were weighted with lead, she went to the doorway of the bedroom and looked in. Then, after carefully drawing the fire-screen in front of the glowing embers, she put on her black toque, her long coat of black fur, her black gloves.

As she crossed the sidewalk to her car, an eddy of wind raised up before her, head-high, a whirl of snowflakes that resembled a wraith for one moment before it was whipped away into the darkness.

A MONTH after that stormy night when Lilla had felt the impact of some far-off gush of feeling, the newspapers published a dispatch reporting the death of Lawrence Teck at the hands of savages.

Four months passed, however, before Lilla received a letter from Parr, the valet.

It had happened in the country of the Mambava. That tribe, despite their well-known animosity at strangers, had not been hostile to Lawrence. Indeed, he had won the friendship of their king. Yet it was in the king's stronghold that the tragedy had happened.

There had been a beer-dance, a disorderly festival, ending in a clash between the Mambava warriors and Lawrence's camp-police. Almost without warning the rifles had cracked, the spears had begun to fly. Lawrence, throwing himself between the parties, had been among the first to fall. Then a frenzy had seized the savages, a panic the intruders. It had been a massacre—a headlong flight amid the Mambava forests, through which Parr, himself badly wounded and half the time unconscious, had been dragged by five Mohammedan survivors. They had gained an outpost fort where, ever since, Parr had lain hovering between life and death, not only crippled by his wounds, but stricken also with the black-water fever. Now, at last, he had gathered strength enough to scrawl these lines.

In all her dreams she saw the long spear-blade flashing into the beloved body. Perhaps from the relentless similarity of those dreams she got the conviction that Lawrence Teck had been stabbed in the right side just above the hip.

Her friends were surprised that she "took it as well as she did." Considering her emotional legacy, they had expected a collapse. On the contrary, she remained, as it seemed, almost passionless. She did not even show that desire for sympathy which is characteristic of hysterical natures.

Fanny Brassfield noticed presently, however, that Lilla could no longer look at negroes without turning as pale as death, that her antipathy to certain colors, sounds and perfumes had increased, and that sometimes she appeared to be listening to a voice inaudible to others.

It was the voice of her thoughts, which she heard, now and then, just as if some one were whispering in her ear.

She became subject to reveries in which there were frequent lapses from all mental function. Her heart was penetrated by a vague, immense alarm, as though the whole mortal universe, in its past as well as in its present manifestations, had perfidiously turned fluid, or even nebulous. She was like one who all her life had been wandering in a void and had just discovered the fact. In her terror she reached out through the shadows to grasp at something that might give back her belief in life's solidity. She plucked a rose, and as she crushed its sweetness to her face its thorn pierced her lip. She burst into a fit of crying and laughing at this reassurance—this proof that there existed, after all, a world of beauty inextricably mingled with despair.

But loneliness remained.

She expected no abatement of this loneliness; for he was gone after showing her that it was he, of a worldful of men, for whom she had been waiting. In their brief time together she had perceived him through the fog of her emotional confusion, aware only of an overpowering congeniality, an almost delirious joy. But now her objective mind, which had nearly become the prey of her subconscious self, was filled with hitherto unsuspected memories of him, a thousand fragmentary recollections that she fitted together into an image more vivid than the man himself had been. And this image, gilded by layer after layer of pathetic thoughts, enlarged by the continuous enhancement of his value, gradually assumed an heroic magnitude and became more splendid than a statue in a temple. So now it was no longer a man that she contemplated in her reveries, but a sort of god whose stubbornness had destroyed her—an Apollo-like Moloch, before whom she sank down and humbly offered up her future.

In those night-dreams of hers, however, he was still a man, subject to mortal tragedy. She saw the long spear-blade flash into his side. Waking with a cry, she discerned, in the act of fading away against the curtains, the dead-white, wedge-shaped face of Anna Zanidov. She went abroad—to Lausanne.

ONE day she entered a bright consulting-room where there rose to meet her, from behind a desk, a calm-looking man with a bushy red-and-white beard. His gaze took in, in a flash, her widow's weeds, her tall, slim person, her delicate, pale-brown face, her features composed and yet a trifle wild, her whole effect of elegance and singularity. She began without a word to unfasten her dress. On her slender right flank, just above the hip, was a red mark like a spear-wound.

The famous physician smoothed his beard reflectively.

"There is a story, perhaps?" And when she had told him everything, he remarked: "Madam, in itself it is nothing. It is the result of a great thing, however—that is to say, your loss. You have pictured to yourself a certain detail of that tragedy so intensely, with so much feeling, that your mind has produced on your body this imitation. These stigmata are not uncommon with certain temperaments of a highly sensitive nature. Some of them are historic. In other ages they have been considered miraculous. Nowadays we cure them by mental suggestion. I shall make out for you a series of appointments."

"The cause will remain," she returned, with a hopeless shrug.

"But I shall change your thoughts about the cause," he said paternally.

"No!" she exclaimed in a low voice, vibrant with apprehension. For she would have carried this mark on her body through life rather than let him efface from her conscious thoughts, or even dim, one recollection of Lawrence.

He understood. Casting down his eyes, he reflected:

"Apparently this charming person has never been told how extreme an example she is of our poor *civilisées*. For the sake of a dead man she is willing, otherwise, to commit slow suicide. If she continues to nurse this grief which is indissoluble from her love, with her predispositions she will go the usual way, probably ending in a psychic collapse. Ah, yes, if she had not come to me with this capillary hemorrhage she would just have drifted on and on into the devil knows what. As it is, I don't fancy that I could make her quite unemotional; but that grief—there's no reason why she should go through life under that additional burden! She is exquisite, young, sure of many happy years with some one else if she is cured of this preoccupation with a man who is dead and gone. Shall I ask permission to try to do her that favor?"

The celebrated specialist, raising his eyes, said benevolently to Lilla:

"At least, madam, you have no objection to my stopping those nightmares of yours?"

Every day for three weeks she returned to the consulting room, sat down in a deep leather chair, fixed her eyes on a bright metal ball, and fell asleep. The famous physician found her, as he had expected, extremely impressionable. On waking she had no objective recollection of what had been said to her. But the dreams ceased to torment her. The mark like a spear wound disappeared from her side.

With a strange, almost unprecedented feeling of peace she traveled down to Lake Como.

HERE she dwelt in a house smothered in flowers, on a promontory that was almost an island.

In the morning she walked in the garden, drenched in sunshine, enveloped in the silence of the lake, beyond which she saw, far away, other villas nestling at the bases of the mountains. A sensation of humility came to her: amid that great panorama of blue and gold she seemed to perceive subtle traces of a beneficent divinity. Was not a beautiful landscape, after all, perhaps a smile of God? The sunshine veiled the hawks that were soaring through the sky in quest of weaker birds; the waters of the lake concealed the fishes that were devouring one another; and when, with a timid and pleading *naïveté*, she paused before a rose-bush, she did not see, behind those petals, the spiders spinning their traps.

As she returned toward the house there stole over her a pleasant weakness, a childlike and tremulous trust; and she felt the soft air more keenly, smelled more delicate fragrances, heard a multitude of infinitesimal sounds that had not reached her ears a moment ago.

She sat in a high-ceiled, white-walled room with French windows opening on a terrace where *olea-fragans* blooms expanded round the base of a statue by Casnova. At last a feeling of incompleteness penetrated her languor; she rose to pace the mosaic floor on which appeared a design of mermaids and tritons.

"What shall I do now? I must fill my life with something. I must find some way to occupy my mind."

She thought of mastering another language; for like many persons of similar temperament she found the learning of foreign tongues a simple matter. But what language? Already she knew French, Italian and German. Russian, then?

She recoiled from that thought, associated as it was with Anna Zanidov.

Sitting down at the piano, she played Chopin.

Her interpretation of the piece was good, but not eloquent. The spirit that she had heard certain great musicians put into it was lacking. She remembered how differently even old Brantome, the critic, had expressed these phrases. She wondered why, with her immense passion for music she had never been able to translate its profoundest spirit.

And she recalled an old longing of hers to compose some musical masterpiece. For that purpose she had faithfully studied harmony, counterpoint and orchestration, had steeped herself in the works of the masters from Palestrina to Stravinsky. Yet her own creative efforts had ended in platitudes. Was it true that women supposed to be more emotional than men were incapable of employing successfully the most intense medium for the revealment of emotion?

"What am I good for? Ah, what shall I do with my life!"

One night, as she leaned against the balustrade of the terrace watching the strings of lights across the lake, a young Roman, tall, dark and aquiline, handsome and strong, laid his hand upon hers.

"It is a world made for happiness," he breathed.

The others in the white-walled room now mellow from lamplight were clustered round the piano and one of them was singing a song by Tosti. Without drawing away her hand, Lilla returned: "Happiness. Yes, tell me in what it consists."

"In the glory of life and love. In the splendors of this world and our acceptance of them—we who are this world's strange, sensitive culmination. Not to question, but to feel, with these feelings of ours that a thousand generations have made so fine, so complex. To be natural in the heart of nature. There!"

She smiled mournfully:

"You realists! And are these things that you celebrate reality? They fade and die——"

"But while they live they live," he cried low, with an accent of austere passion, and seized her in his arms.

For a moment she did not move. She let herself feel that contact, that strength and fervor, with a nearly analytical attentiveness, with a melancholy curiosity. But of a sudden she pushed him from her with a surprising strength, her heart beating wildly. She stared at him in amazement, then entered the house.

A fortnight later she returned to New York.

WINTER was imminent; but few of her friends had yet appeared in town. One day on Fifth Avenue, however, she met old Brantome, the critic, who invited her to an afternoon of music at his apartment.

Men leaned smoking in the heavily curtained embrasures of the windows, their foreheads lowered, their eyebrows casting over their eyes shadows as if of a profound fatigue. Beside the hall door loomed the white mane of Brantome, who turned at an inflow of artificial light to greet the small Italian woman that had recently become a prima donna.

Then some one persuaded Brantome to play a piece of Schumann's. And once more Lilla heard "Vienna Carnival."

When he had finished playing, Brantome sat down beside her.

"So it is as magical as ever, a bit of music?" he inquired, in his rumbling, hoarse voice.

"You were playing that at the moment when I first saw my husband," she said.

He contemplated her with his haggard old eyes. Patting her hand, he declared:

"All these emotions that you, a beautiful young woman, have felt, I believe that I, an ugly, worn-out old man, have felt also. I, too, have felt in my time that the world was at an end. I have suffered from the same inability to return into life. Well, will you think me cruel—shall I appear to you as the thief of an inestimable treasure—if I tell you something? In time, sooner or later, one recovers. I don't mean that one forgets. It is always there; and a chance sound or perfume brings it back to one. But at last it returns so gently! One feels then, instead of pain, almost a gentle, melancholy pleasure. Then you will learn that there may be certain subtle joys in grief."

She lowered her gaze, flinching inwardly as one sometimes does when credited with a feeling that one no longer fully deserves. She heard Brantome benevolently murmuring the platitude:

"It is often in making others forget their sorrows that one diminishes one's own, and in doing good to others that one finds good for oneself."

At the piano sat a well-known French composer. When she had heard him play some bizarre passages, Lilla turned again to Brantome.

"I ought not to come here," she said.

She explained that in this place she "felt her worthlessness." It would be better, she thought, to remain in the Brassfield atmosphere where perhaps in gaining the Brassfield state of mind one might find an anodyne for this sense of insignificance. For to those others of course, wealth and social position were the important things in life, magnificently making up for the lack of other qualities. If they had artistic enthusiasms, it was because they regarded the arts as did the Roman conquerors—as elements created for no other reason than to enhance their triumphs.

She sighed, her pale-brown cheek resting against her black-gloved hand, her black fur collar framing her neck on which the strand of pearls was less lustrous than the teeth between her parted lips.

Brantome's leonine old visage grew soft as he looked at her, and under his white mustaches of a viking there appeared a sad smile, as if he were thinking that things might have been different with him, had she, with this beauty and these predilections, been young when he had been young.

"Oh, no, you must not stop coming here," he protested gently. "It's only right that these poor fellows should have their glimpses of a composite of all the beautiful muses—who, as you'll remember, were not themselves practitioners in the arts, but the inspirers of artists. Isn't there, for women, besides the joys of personal accomplishment, another satisfaction, which one might call vicarious?"

She gave him again her bitter, listless smile.

"You believe that stuff about women's inspiration?"

"But why not, good heavens! When it is a fact of life——"

He bade her consider the great music written by men. Almost invariably one found in its depths a longing for synthesis with some ideal beauty produced by thoughts of some idealized woman. Or else by woman in the abstract—that obsession which, ever since the days of Dante and the troubadours, had attained a nearly religious quality, against whose pressure even the modern materialist struggled in vain. Yes, ever since that fatal twelfth century it was woman the goddess, the Beatrice-form beckoning on the staircase of Paradise, who attracted upward the dazzled gaze of man, and who seemed by an unearthly smile—with which man himself had possibly endowed her—to promise a mystical salvation and a sort of celestial bliss.

"But at times, as I say," he concluded, with a shrug, "some lucky artist is suddenly confronted by all that in bodily form—by a Beatrice in a sable coat from Fifth Avenue and a little black hat from Paris."

For a moment she stared before her with shining eyes; but in her silvery voice there was a cadence of irony when she demanded:

"Whom shall I inspire? Show me the one by whose aid I can pretend that the woman is responsible for the masterpieces, as no doubt Vittoria Colonna sometimes pretended to herself in the case of Michael Angelo. But remember that it must be an affair like that one, romantically platonic—*à la manière de Provence.*"

Brantome nodded benignantly.

"Yes, certainly, *à la manière de Provence*—since music is so very impersonal an art," he muttered with an absent-minded, haggard smile.

But Lilla was watching a man and a woman who sat in a shadowy alcove, and who, as some one began to play a nocturne, let their fingers twine together.

One night at the end of the winter, she astonished everybody by appearing with Fanny Brassfield in a box at the opera, wearing a black velvet dress that made her, in that great horseshoe blooming with flower-like gowns, the objective of all eyes.

"There is hope!" said one young man waggishly to another. "Cornie Rysbroek ought to see this."

But Cornelius Rysbroek was traveling, far away.

AS FOR Lawrence, he was slipping farther and farther into the past. There were times when, without the aid of his picture, Lilla could no longer visualize his face. Their moment of love became blurred in her memory. At times, remorsefully, as if struggling against a lethargy mysteriously imposed upon her natural instincts, she strove to revive her grief in its full strength and then, for an instant, her recollections became as poignant as though he had been with her only yesterday. But that perception could not always be evoked at will; and ordinarily Lilla was aware only of a faint echo from a distant region of pathos and delight—an echo that reached her through a host of other sounds, like the intrinsic spirit of a modern symphony, so wrapped up in dissonances as to be nearly unintelligible.

"Where is he?" she wondered. "Are those right who would say that he has ceased to exist except in memory?"

At this thought she turned cold, then began to weep despairingly, not for him so much as for the blurring of her remembrance of him. And sometimes when she had not thought of him all day, she was awakened in the night by her own cry:

"Give me back my love! Give me back my grief!"

Rising from her bed, she pored over the books on spiritualism that still formed a long row on the shelf of her writing desk. She envied the women who were reported to have received through automatic writing messages from the dead. She sat down in the silence of the night to hold over the clean sheet of paper the perpendicular pencil. With her head bowed forward, her pose an epitome of patience, she fixed her eye upon the pencil-point which slowly made meaningless curlicues.

But suddenly, when she was expecting nothing, there passed through her a tingling warmth such as that which must pervade the earth at springtime. She stared round the room with the thought, "His spirit is here!"

And she uttered, very distinctly, in the hope that the words might penetrate his world from hers,

"I love you as much as ever!"

Those moments became rare. At last they ceased to occur.

"He has passed so far into the beyond that he can no longer return to me."

As if it had been awaiting this acknowledgement, a thicker curtain descended between Lilla and the past.

One day she put on her hat intending to drive up-town and spend an hour in Lawrence's old rooms; for nothing was changed there except that nowadays the curtains were always drawn and the hearth was always cold. But this time she purposed to light the fire and pretend——

Instead, she went to Brantome's.

"I knew you'd come back," said Brantome, looking at Lilla out of his massive, ruined face.

"How did you?"

"Why, you don't know where to turn."

He made her sit down beside him on a divan apart from the rest. She looked like a lady of cavalier days, he told her, in her tricorn hat of maroon velvet, with a brown plume trailing down to the shoulder from which was slipping her maroon-colored cloak edged with fur. He assured her that she had never looked so lovely.

At these words she felt despondency instead of pleasure.

Across the room half in shadow with a ray of lamplight falling on his hands, a young man sat sunken in a wheel-chair. He was frail, obviously an invalid; yet in the gloom of the alcove where he was sitting his complexion seemed bronzed as if from a life in the sun. His sensitive face, disfigured by his sufferings and his thoughts, leaned forward; his eyes were fixed on the keyboard of the piano.

"What!" Brantome exclaimed, "you don't know of David Verne?"

She thought that she had heard some of his music, but could not recall the impression it had made on her.

"The impression produced by Verne's work isn't usually vague."

"Has he so much talent?"

"I was confident," said Brantome, "that he would be the great composer of this age."

"And now?"

"It's a question whether he'll live through the spring."

He told her David Verne's story.

AT THE height of his promise, in consequence, it was said, of a certain mental shock, the young composer had fallen victim to a rare, insidious disease arising apparently from an organic derangement small in itself but deadly in its secondary effects. The chief characteristics of this malady were a general muscular prostration growing ever more profound and a slowly increasing feebleness of vital action. It was an illness for which medical science had provided no cure: the physicians could only prescribe such drugs as arsenic and strychnia to postpone as long as possible the climax of that fatal debility. The patient was already afflicted with an immense exhaustion, incapacitated from any but the slightest of muscular efforts, unable to carry on the simplest occupation. Yet despite his almost continuous attacks of headache he could think—of the collapse of his hopes, of the approaching end.

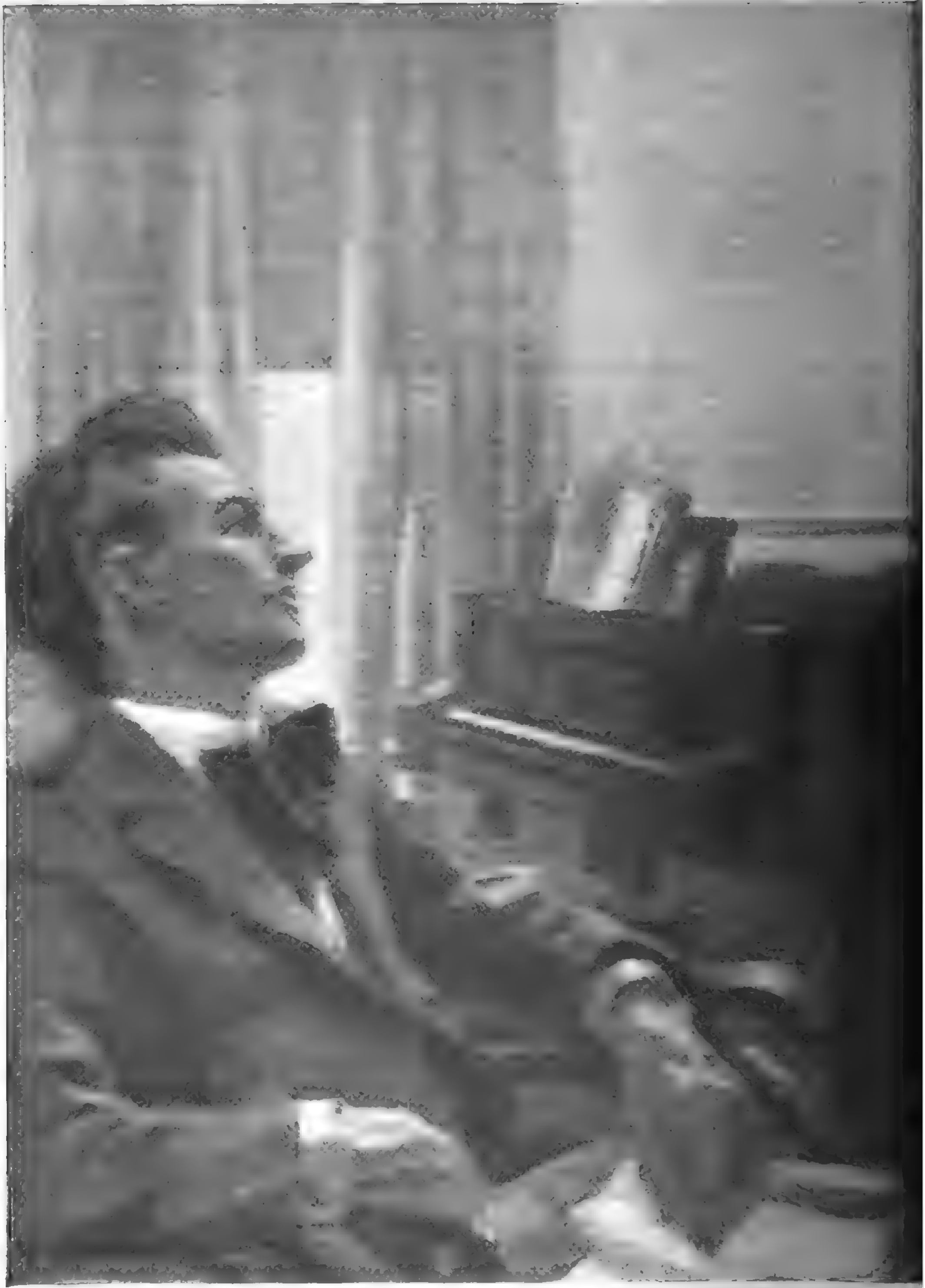
In the beginning David Verne had rebelled against this fate with all the force of one who feels that he is in the world for an unparalleled purpose—who refuses to believe that any physical affliction is meant to thwart the unfoldment of his genius. All the splendid raptures pressing toward expression, the conviction of unique capacity and great prolificness, reinforced his determination to be well again.

Disqualified long ago from walking, today David Verne could hardly raise his hands to lay them limply upon the keyboard of a piano.

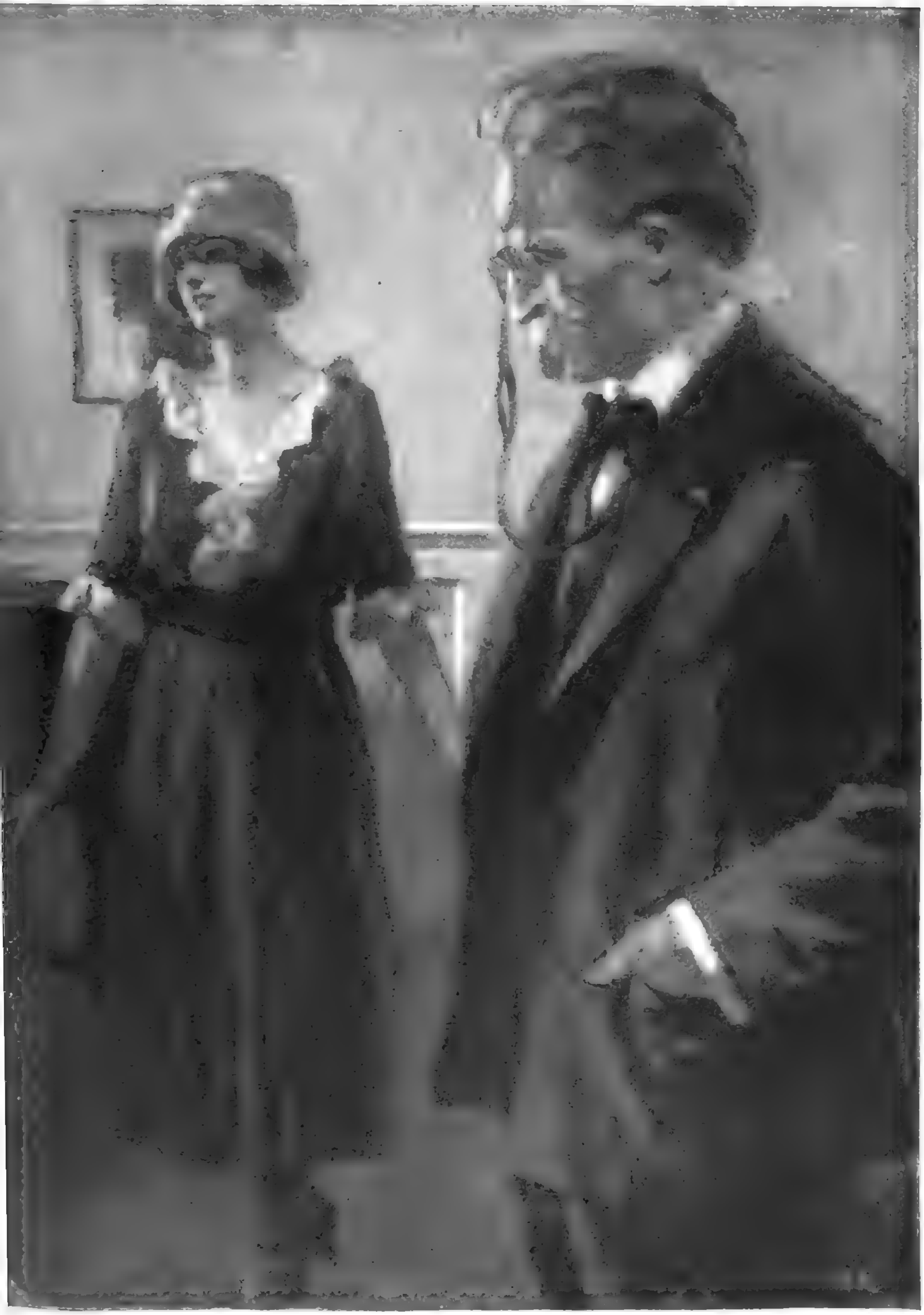
His mind had suffered as sad a deterioration as his body. Formerly fine, as befitted the source of fine achievements, it was now deformed by a ferocious bitterness. The last of those bright qualities which in other days had endeared him to his friends were dying now, or perhaps were already dead. In fact, Brantome confessed, it was doubly painful to receive him here; one had to see the wreck not only of a young physique, but also of an invaluable spirit.

Lilla sat frozen. At last she uttered:

"Ah! this world of ours!"



Now and then for a moment she forgot his infirmity: he became the hero of an idyllic scene. could be sure. "You are here," his eyes said to her.



But unlike those heroes he spoke only of the moment, since it was only the moment of which he
"I have this hour at least. Nothing else matters."

And she had a vision of a universal monster evolving exquisite forms of beauty only to destroy them fiendishly.

"Yes," Brantome assented, he too, for all his experience with life, looking crushed anew. Indeed, in his old countenance was a look of defeat as dismal as though the ruin of that young man's hopes had involved one more precious aspiration of his own. After a pause he explained, "I haven't suggested that you, who have enough unhappy recollections, meet the poor fellow——"

"What was the shock that caused it?" she breathed.

He made a hopeless gesture and returned:

"I don't say it was that. It's the others who say that the thing can be produced that way. God knows it floored him, though! Too sensitive!—but if he hadn't been we shouldn't have had the music. These poor chaps, always balanced between joy and sorrow by a hair!" He recollected himself and looked away from her; then, at another thought, he ground out between his teeth, "One of those Beatrices of ours. As if she had come to a harp and had made all its strings vibrate just for the pleasure of hearing their quality, and then had gone on content——"

Lilla rose, drew her cloak around her and departed with an appalling sensation of pity and resentment.

ONE afternoon, returning to her house on lower Fifth Avenue, as she entered the hall paved with black-and-white tiles, she saw a shabby little man trying to rise from a settee between two consoles, by aid of a pair of crutches. For an instant she had a hazy idea that he ought to be holding a breakfast tray in his hands. Then, with a sickening leap of her heart, she realized that this was Parr, who had been Lawrence Teck's valet.

He had thought she would want to receive from him, promptly on his return, a first-hand report on that African tragedy.

"But where have you been all this time?"

He had been a long while recovering from the wound that had crippled him and from the black-water fever. Then he had found himself penniless, dependent on the charity of traders and petty government officials in the port-town lying just above the equator. He had drifted about, a reproach, perhaps, to a certain human callousness engendered by the tropics, till finally an old friend of Lawrence Teck had appeared from Mozambique, found him sitting in tatters on the steps of a grog-shop and paid his passage home.

"You should have let me know," she said remorsefully.

He hung his head in shame.

She led him into the drawing-room and seated him in one of the mulberry chairs. He had become an old man. His honest, lantern-jawed face was gray and drawn; his hair was white.

And then there had always been the idea in his head that he ought to have fallen with his master.

"I couldn't help myself, ma'am," he said in a broken voice. "Before I hardly knew what was up he was done for, and I had this spear wound in me, and our gun-boys was dragging me off amongst them, shooting to right and left. I didn't rightly know what was going on any more than if I'd got mauled by a pack of lions. Once when I kind of come to myself I tried to make them go back; but they told me they'd seen the Mambava finishing Mr. Teck as he lay on the ground——"

She gave a start and a moan. He recoiled in contrition.

At last, when she had bade him continue:

"Besides, they was after us all the way. Sometimes they even showed up in our path instead of behind us, waving their shields and shouting for a parley. But we'd had enough of their treachery and our boys let them have it. Night and day it was dodge and run. Then we got out of the Mambava forests, and they carried me the rest of the way in a hammock made of vines and poles. Even then they never dared to light a fire, because we could always hear the Mambava behind us, telephoning from one village to another with their drums. But I couldn't hope to make you feel it, ma'am, even what I took in myself when I wasn't out of my head. It was just bad. Of course, the worst of it was that Mr. Teck was gone."

He began to cry weakly, exclaiming:

"I'd been with him everywheres!"

And now it was she who lowered her head in shame.

She asked him about his plans.

He was living with relatives. He hoped

to get a job as a watchman. This idea was repugnant to her. The shattered, tremulous little man was dignified by his grief, whose intensity, after all this time, filled her with confusion and self-contempt. Then she thought, "But now, by his aid, I shall regain that dear grief!" She said:

"You must let me arrange to have your pay go on. That's what Mr. Teck would have wished."

She took his address, told a servant to call a taxicab and went down the front steps with Parr, holding him by his bony arm as he lowered his crutches. Overwhelmed by this condescension, he stammered:

"I was afraid to come here, ma'am."

She replied,

"We need each other."

Next day she sought him out.

SHE found him near Stuyvesant Square, in a shabby room overlooking a back yard in which an ailanthus tree spread its limbs above some clothes-lines. She leaned forward in a raveled chair, with her veil tucked up so that she could see him better, her gloved hands clasped tightly in her lap, her eyes intent. When he had recovered from her simplicity, Parr prepared to tell her what she had come to hear.

But there were so many tales about the hero to choose from!

"Anything," she exclaimed. "Make me hear what he used to say, know what he used to think. Make me see him there." And, clenching her hands, "Make him live!"

She meant, "Make him vivid again in my heart, where, against all my efforts, his face has faded away."

Parr held his crutches against his shoulder as if they were the harp of a minstrel who has come from afar to chant the epic of some already mythical character. His faded coat was wrinkled round the neck, his collar was split at the folds and a faint smell of iodoform mingled with Lilla's perfume, which a Viennese artist in odors had concocted especially to "match her temperament."

"One time in Nyasaland——"

"Not the jungles!" she protested, flinching back.

"The desert, then?" he ventured.

He showed Lawrence to her in the desert that is called Erg, the waste of shifting sand; and in the desert called Chebka, a wilderness of boulders; and in the desert called Hamedan, the bleak plateaux where there are no springs of water; and in the desert called Gaci, the oases, rich with date-palms, pomegranates and oleanders. The caravan routes unrolled before her, at sunset. The hills turned to ashes of rose; the sand-dunes to heliotrope; and against the sky appeared a caravan of many thousands of camels bearing on their humps, impoverished from hard travel, the traffic that passes between the great oases—the rugs and the oil, the sacks of dates and boiled locusts, and, in the closed palanquins, the women destined to new slaveries. A great calm descended at dusk; the tents of dingy brown hair surrounded the sheikh's pavilion which was topped with a plume. The air was filled with odors of camels, of *couscous*, of sagebrush. The camp-fires of desert grass flared in the night wind.

He was always well received by the caravan chiefs, the sheikhs of the oases, the heads of the desert monasteries—drowsy towns with arcaded streets and tunnels of mud, into whose holy precincts came no echoes of war. For he had the knack of endearing himself to fierce men by something in his character at the same time inflexible and kindly, by a sympathy that embraced that other religion, or at least its intrinsic spirit, so that he could repeat the *Fatiha* with good grace before the tombs of saints. Even the Tuaregs, the untamed bandits whose faces were always muffled in black, received him into their tents of red-dyed leather, where he joked with their wives and daughters, the "little queens," who were accustomed to ride alone, fifty miles on their trotting camels, to visit a sweetheart.

"But my picture was with him," thought Lilla. "I was with him there, just as he, through his picture, though I had never seen him, was with me. In our longings, that crossed in space, we were already united. Even then our actual meeting was predestined—like our parting."

But sometimes there had been trouble. Once he had encountered a band of Shaambah Arabs out, like knights-errant, in quest of any adventure. They had fought him all afternoon in a desert spotted with gold and purple lilies, the burnooses flitting in a wide ring as the horses raced through the heat. Then suddenly they had vanished. The luke-warm water flavored with goatskin and tar, the long drafts of sour camel's milk had tasted good after that scrimmage like a combat in chivalry!

What was it that had driven him into such places, when there had been a great rich world of safety? Some fatal desire for regions where beauty sported more obviously than here the signs of its origin, or death the mask of beauty?

"Yes, there's a fatality in all our preferences. Is that what the Arabs mean when they say that our destinies are written on our foreheads?"

"What is their word for fate?" she inquired of Parr.

"*Mektoub*—it is written."

"*Mektoub!*" And presently, "Do you speak Arabic?"

"Oh, no, ma'am; but Mr. Teck did, as well as any of 'em."

"Tell me more," she said.

So he took her to the oases. As one drew near, there floated from the minaret a thin cry, "Allah is great! Allah is great! Allah is great!" In the house of the sheikh, sitting among the hawk-nosed horsemen, they dipped their right hands into *couscous* flavored with cinnamon, ate honey-cakes and nougat. In the doorways, beyond the range of the lamp, there was a soft clashing of bangles, a craning of veiled heads. Then, in the cool of the night, they walked to the café, where cobwebs hung from the palm-wood rafters and the raised hearth glowed. Here were the men drinking coffee infused with rose-water, pepper or mint, smoking tobacco and hasheesh. And here were the dancing-women—"The Pearl," "The Rose," "Lips of Pomegranate," "The Star"—their foreheads bearing the tattoo marks of their tribes, their cheeks and chins smeared with saffron, their finger-nails tinted with henna, their bodies moving convulsively under rose-colored satin dresses.

But Lilla was no longer listening.

Dusk had covered the window-panes; the shabby furniture had turned nebulous. In these shadows Parr heard the words, meditatively pronounced:

"I think that I should like to learn Arabic."

"You, ma'am!"

He gaped at her vague, pearly face as if she had suggested some enormity. It was an ugly language, all bubbling and snorting, and a very hard one to learn!

"A hard one? Good. Can you find me a teacher somewhere?"

The door opened to frame a careworn woman in a gingham dress, who said shyly to Lilla:

"Oh, excuse me, ma'am. I thought—" And to Parr, "I'll keep your supper warm."

With her sleek bandeaux of lusterless brown hair and her thick straight eyebrows meeting above her nose, she looked like some model for a fifteenth-century Italian painter, who had suddenly faded and now was exiled from the studio to the region of pots and pans. But she was only Parr's niece.

As Lilla departed down the black staircase redolent of boiled cabbage, she reflected that these surroundings were going to contaminate the sad pleasure that she planned to obtain through Parr. Her instinctive epicureanism demanded that the scene of these evocations should not be sordid. Besides, it was intolerable that Parr, of whom Lawrence had been fond, should not be better housed.

So Lilla moved Parr and his astounded relatives to a pretty little dwelling in Greenwich Village, with waxed floors, chintz hangings at the windows and Della Robbia plaques in the sitting-room.

After seeing them installed, she said to herself:

"Poor things! How abominable I am!"

At any rate, there was nothing abominable in her having sent Parr to a surgeon who, though he doubted the patient would ever be quite well again, guaranteed to abolish the crutches.

ON THE day that Parr was to go to the hospital, Lilla entered the Greenwich Village house to find a stranger sitting under the Della Robbia plaques. He rose with a graceful dignity, bowed, and stood gazing down at her out of dark, lustrous eyes.

Parr explained that this stranger was prepared to give lessons in Arabic. His name was Hamoud-bin-Said. He was an Omân Arab from Zanzibar.

Parr had found him in a Turkish café in Washington Street, oppressed by the weight of successive misfortunes, and by that sense of fatality which benumbs the Arab of vitiated stock. For little by little the soft, moist airs of Zanzibar had corroded the spirit of the Omân Arabs, who had sailed thither, in the old days, from their own rugged land, in great fierceness and ruthlessness, unconquered by men, and incapable of foreseeing that some day they would be vanquished by perfumed breezes. As for Hamoud-bin-Said, he was typical of his kind to-day in that humid paradise, where want of energy and lack of discipline or any well-defined purpose, affect even the young.

"As you see him, ma'am, he's down on his luck. But I think he has seen——"

The young Arab remained impassive, erect, as handsome as a faintly tinted statue of Pride, yet pathetic in his salt-and-pepper suit. And Lilla, despite his costume and his errand, divined in him a certain subtle relationship to herself, received an impression of "aristocratic" feeling, derived from a consciousness of superior birth and fortune. Parr need not have told her—especially in so audible a stage-whisper—that the stranger had "seen better days."

"You speak English?" she inquired.

The Arab's limpid eyes were slowly infused with light. His clear-cut carnelian lips started apart; but he did not answer until the last vibration of her voice had died away like the echo of a silver bell in a landscape that one had believed to be empty of human life. In a low, grave, muffled tone, he said:

"A little. Enough, perhaps, madam, I hope."

"I shall expect you on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at eleven o'clock."

He bowed in silence. She felt his relief that was mingled with a sense of abasement; and she wondered what he had been, that he should suffer from the prospect of turning an honest penny.

She received a note from Brantome, informing her that if she went to a certain orchestral concert she would hear a piece that David Verne had written at the height of his promise.

To Lilla it was a new voice in the world of music, ultra-modern, yet incorrigibly melodic, giving utterance to immemorial emotions with great nobility. Those passages of almost intolerable aspiration were underlaid with dissonant harmonies, as if hell itself had poured all its allurements into tone, to engulf the theme that was struggling to soar upward. It became a terrific combat, in which Beauty was to be recognized in sublimated form, striving to end its likeness to another Beauty, seductive in a different, monstrous way, yet all too similar. It was a battle translated into sound, so enlarged and enriched by the imagination of the composer that a universe, instead of a single soul, seemed to be involved in it.

Suddenly in the midst of a piercing blare of brass there was a moment of chaos; then the theme, as if soaring free, lost itself in extraordinary altitudes, drowned in a vertiginous whirl from violins. Midway of this ecstasy, a deafening crash of cymbals ironically ended everything.

When she roused herself at last, Lilla perceived that the concert-hall was empty except for the ushers who were turning up the seats.

HAMOUD-BIN-SAID suggested that she master first the most difficult consonants—"hâ," to be pronounced with the force at the back of the palate, "dâd" and "tâ," emphasized by pressing the tongue far back, and the strong gutteral "ên." These were sounds that had no association with any in English, French, German or Italian. Lilla was filled with dismay.

"But this poor young man lost from the Arabian Nights must live," she reflected, eyeing the salt-and-pepper suit with secret horror.

He was extremely neat, however; and his small right hand, with which he turned the pages of the text-book, was as well cared for as hers. He brought with him into the library an almost imperceptible scent of aloes. His grave composure sometimes made her forget his youth.

Now and then, the lesson finished, she detained him in talk, out of curiosity.

From his father he had inherited a house in Zanzibar, a mansion, indeed, of coraline limestone fitted with doors of palm-wood elegantly carved. At the same time he had fallen heir to a grove of clove-trees; in short, he had been wealthy. And there was no spot as fair as Zanzibar! It was a place of brilliant sunshine and purple shadows, of gray walls over which peacocks hung their tails, of mysterious stairways, and latticed windows behind which ladies sat peering through their embroidered face-screens resembling semi-circular candle-shades; and there was always a marvelous clamor in the streets, and silence in the patios full of flowers.

"It was in Zanzibar," thought Lilla, "that Lawrence found my picture."

And gazing as if indifferently at a vaseful of roses, she asked, with a feeling of suffocation, "Why did you leave there?"

He gave a start, and looked like a man who in his sleep has fallen off of a roof. But immediately, lowering his full eyelids, he became the handsome statue, or perhaps the delicately bearded effigy in tan-colored wax, of a young caliph who had incurred the hatred of the jinn.

It was simple. He had squandered his fortune.

When he began to starve, he joined the *safari* of a Muscat trader, traveled up-country, returned to the coast sick with fever. Late one night, while walking below the sea-wall, yearning for Zanzibar, he saw a man running, from time to time throwing something into the sea, and another man running silently in pursuit with a knife in his hand. He waded along the shore, and presently found in the surf a bag of gold-dust. Next morning he slipped aboard a north-bound coaster. Instead of calling at Zanzibar, this time it went clear to Suez!

In Suez a fortune-telling dervish, perhaps because he had just seen an American pass by, told Hamoud-bin-Said that his wanderings would take him to America. Hamoud accepted the words of the holy man as a second-hand pronouncement of God. At that time there was even a ship at Suez bound for New York.

"It was my destiny," he averred, sitting motionless in his atrocious suit, so young yet so full of bizarre recollections, impassive at the inevitable thought that this "destiny" of his might be preparing events stranger still than those which he had endured.

A PALLID, black-haired woman with pendent earrings—a woman who rather resembled Anna Zanidov—was playing a sea-piece by MacDowell in the light of a tall lamp. The hall door swung open; the unsympathetic face and square shoulders of David Verne's attendant appeared above the back of the wheel-chair. The invalid, looking up at Brantome, murmured:

"Let him put me in the alcove, where it's dark enough for your friends to forget that I'm here. And don't bother about me."

"What!" Brantome protested. "I'm not even to bring a beautiful lady to talk to you?"

"It's rather late for talks with beautiful ladies," David Verne replied in his weak, dull voice. "Besides, it's music that I've chosen to torment myself with this afternoon. Where is she?" And when Brantome had nodded toward Lilla, "Ah. She was here once before."

She was wearing a brown coat-frock heavily trimmed with fur; her brown velvet hat, very wide across the forehead, was brightened by a rosette of silver ribbon. The black pearls in the lobes of her ears, just visible below her fluffy brown hair, completed the harmony of her costume with her person, while bestowing upon her face a maturity in contrast with the invalid's youthfulness—which all his sufferings and despairs had not eclipsed.

When she had sat down beside him, he regarded her with a sort of suppressed aversion.

The attendant, a bullet-headed fellow with Scandinavian cheek-bones, leaned down, looking flagrantly solicitous, and inquired in unctuous tones if there was "anything else at present." At this question David Verne appeared to be overwhelmed with a dreary contempt. He did not trouble himself to reply; and the attendant went away, walking cautiously on the sides of his feet, the back of his head somehow suggesting that he was gritting his teeth.

Lilla surprised herself by saying:

"Why do you have that man?"

"I don't know. He is appallingly stupid." He paused, with an effect of still more profound exhaustion, then breathed: "He hates me, no doubt, because I resent his stupidity. I resent stupidity," he repeated, giving her a glance of weak alarm, as if wondering, "Are you stupid, too?"

He seemed assured by his scrutiny of her. A coldness began to melt out of his eyes.

Then he looked astonished, rather like a child that is unexpectedly led up before a Christmas-tree.

Now she had analyzed the most touching impression that David Verne produced—an impression as of a child who has come into the world with a heart full of blitheness and trust, only to be mistreated. A child, but an extremely precocious one, with a child's round chin, but with a brow of genius; with eyes accustomed to visions, but with lips almost too delicate to belong to a man. Another incongruity was presented in his complexion—bronzed as though by the sun, mockingly bestowing on him one of the aspects of health.

It was hard to talk to him, since every topic must lead to some interest that he was relinquishing. His doom, hanging over them like a black cloud, stifled all those gleams of enthusiasm which normally would have illumined such a conversation. But presently he forgot himself in watching her moving lips, in gazing at her hair, her throat, her hands, in letting his eyes embrace, with reluctance, all her singularity, which was made doubly exquisite by the fastidiousness of her costume. While inhaling her perfume, he listened with a blank look to the silvery cadence of her voice.

At last he asked her:

"Do you come here often?"

"Oh, no."

"Why not?" He stared at the abandoned piano. "Why not every week?" And, in a soft, impulsive rush of words, blurred by haste, and maybe by intention, "I have so few weeks left."

AS WEEK followed week, it was evident that David Verne watched her and listened to her as he watched and listened to no other person, with an attention as though there were something unique in her most trivial utterance, and with a sadness as though she symbolized all the allurements of life from which he must presently depart. And at last it became evident that he had found in this relationship a charm more piercing than if their association could have had a different outcome.

A time came when his armor of misanthropy crumbled away; and he confessed to her, in the shadowy alcove of Brantome's living-room.

He told her that she had covered the page on which Finis was already written with a glow of gold, as though, at the last moment, a shutter opening on a paradise had swung ajar.

He declared that she could not imagine the blackness that had surrounded him at her first appearance. His heart had been cased in ice; he had hated every one. Then she had come holding beauty in one hand and tenderness in the other. Although he believed in nothing but a mechanistic universe, he had thought of those figures, half woman and half goddess, that descend from another plane, in the old mystical tales, to lure one back to faith with a celestial smile. He protested that he was not far from regaining that deep-rooted belief of his race, of which Brantome had spoken—the idea that woman might be angelic.

He even said:

"Suppose your kindness were the reflection of something still more lovely, which we can not see with these eyes?"

He went on to other, similar rhapsodies, such phrases as bubble from the lips of those who, in the extremity of despair, exhausted by their sufferings, become, with a sigh of relief, like little children. Amid the shadows of the alcove his eyes shone; and even his body, helpless in the wheel-chair, quivered as if with new life.

"If you had appeared sooner! The music I might have written! But then, everything would be different. There would have been no reason for your pity."

On the hearth the log that was nearly consumed fell with a shower of sparks, shot forth one last flame, which brightened the room that had become for a moment a whole world. And that light flashed over the many rows of books, which made Lilla imagine a vast human audience, all aglow from a final blaze of genius.

She leaned toward him, staring into his eyes as one who would summon from a sepulchre something more precious than love.

He understood her, and assented:

"Yes, what a victory, eh? Even on the threshold of death! And even though the inspiration was the embodiment of pity only! But men before me—though not so far gone, perhaps—have transmitted to the world the songs that rose in their hearts as a result of unconsummated, even unrequited, love. Who knows? That, too, may come just in time. I may write one more song."

Before her mind's eye there sprang out the full picture of her part in such a triumph.

Was it not she who would virtually be the creative force? Had he not become, in these last days of his, a shattered instrument that she alone could make musical again? And her long-thwarted aspirations coalesced into this desire, in which, it may be, her compassion was disorganized by egotism, her compunctions swallowed up in ruthlessness.

"You will do it!" she cried softly, leaning closer still, holding his hand more tightly, blinding him by the glorification of her smile.

Hardly knowing what she was saying, finding at the tip of her tongue all the arguments that had failed to help her in her griefs, she spoke of the prodigies accomplished by will, the triumphs of faith over fate, the miracles of love.

"Of love?" he repeated.

The log on the hearth was ashes. But that morning there had drifted through the city a message from the country—of a new spring, which would not be like nature's previous unfoldments, yet could not, for all its subtle differences, be denied. Was it something like that in Lilla, or only a tender duplicity born of this new ruthlessness of hers, that made her press his limp hand against her kindling cheek?

Now and then, for a moment, she forgot his infirmity. He became the young hero of an idyllic scene such as those that seem attractive enough in adolescence. But unlike those heroes he spoke only of the moment, since it was only the moment of which he could be sure. "You are here!" his eyes said to her, as she entered the room. "I have this hour at least. Nothing else matters." Then, by aid of the sunset, the warm breeze in his face, the flowers on the table, the fragrance of her pefume and the smoothness of her hand, he tried to drown himself in a sea of sensation, like one who listens, in a glamour of stained glass and a cloud of incense, to the protracted sweetness of an organ playing the Nunc Dimittis.

Sometimes he would say:

"When I am gone, you will be as fair as ever. That is good. The ancients who entered their temples to worship the goddess must have redoubled their love with the thought that the beauty of her marble person would survive them."

Or perhaps:

"Yes, you will still be young. And presently— No, I shall pretend that you will never turn to another."

He thought that her ensuing look of sadness was a reproach to him; but she was reproaching herself.

But here was a miracle. The invalid had ceased to decline in health! And that declension, which formerly had been uninterrupted, seemed stopped just by the hand that she had held out to him on that first full day of spring—by the slender hand that had owed its beauty to its apparent uselessness.

Then he began to jot down, in feeble signs, some scraps of music.

ONE evening, as she drove home, the city seemed hung with banners. "Ah, fate!" she cried, clenching her fists, and uttering a savage laugh of defiance. She entered her house radiant, erect, shining with triumph. In the black-and-white hall, at the entrance to the drawing-room, a man stood before her, tanned, lean from physical hardships, strange-looking and yet familiar. Instead of a small mustache intended to be debonaire, he had a heavy one; his shoulders were wider and straighter than formerly; he advanced with a quick, swinging step.

"Cornie Rysbroek!"

She laid her palms on the new shoulders of this friend of her childhood and flooded him with her victorious smile.

"What have you done to yourself?" she laughed, rather wildly. "Where do you come from? India?"

"I went on to China."

He had traveled up the Yang-tse River, had crossed Tse-Chouan, had reached the borders of Tibet. Her happy look continued to embrace him; but she hardly heard what he said. She did not perceive that he had undertaken that journey in imitation of the other—perhaps in the hope of finding in those distant, hard places the secret of Lawrence Teck's attractiveness. And, in fact, he looked stronger in spirit as well as in body. The hypochondriac, the timid dilettante, seemed to have slunk away; in his place stood a man who had forced himself, against all his natural instincts, to endure extremes of cold and heat, dirt and famine, hardship and danger. Even now his face was calm; but he could not keep his eyes from shining at her.

"You'll stay to dinner, Cornie. Just us."

From the doorway she came rushing back to throw her arms round him, and cry like a delighted child:

"Dear old Cornie! I'm so happy!"

Did Lilla, forgetting her husband, turn to Rysbroek—or to David Verne? "Sacrifice" will be continued in the November Number, out October 15.

A Broken-Hearted Success

Have You Ever Had Great Wealth? If so, Did You Find it Embarrassing? This Young Man Had Both Experiences—and Some More—All of Which go to Make a Class-A Tale

By Walter de Leon

Author of "Brooders," "In Hell-Hole Swamp," etc.

EVEN if he were the son of an animal trainer, no young man without experience or aptitude could be expected to walk into a cage of lions and put them through their tricks successfully. Furthermore, it would be brutally unjust to place a young man in such a situation. Similarly, then, is it not equally unfair to a youth devoid of the instincts and inclinations of the trader to foist upon his unprepared shoulders the responsibilities of colossal wealth?

So thought Neil Rogers after three years of assiduous and increasingly distasteful study of the ramifications of the huge fortune his father had bequeathed him, a study that had interrupted the literary pursuit in which he had been blissfully absorbed. Consequently, upon his twenty-sixth birthday, Neil called a meeting of the trustees and executors of the estate.

"Gentlemen," he glanced in turn at the white, gray and bald heads surrounding the table, "I have decided to leave the administration of my estate in your hands—permanently. I appreciate your aid and efforts in my behalf the past three years, even though I failed absolutely to grasp your view-point. Your advice has all been directed toward further money-making. Gentlemen, I have too much now. The very bulk of it oppresses me.

"As friends, socially and financially, of my father, your interests are indissolubly joined with hi—, er, mine. I hereby give you the authority to form a corporation to conserve and direct my properties, to appoint your own officers and to fix their salaries. Make these salaries substantial, gentlemen. There is plenty for all.

"You have preached the doctrine that money must be kept circulating. After three years of tabulation and calculation you are nevertheless unable exactly to determine the value of my father's investments throughout the world. I recently estimated that in order to keep in circulation the income from my father's local investments alone I must spend nine thousand dollars each and every day of my life. Gentlemen, that is asking too much of any single man.

"I have but one request—a new check-book sent me the first of every month. I shall forward same to you at the end of the month for you to balance. That you may not accuse me of laziness, let me say that I purpose to work, and work hard. But not with figures. I'm through with them for the rest of my life. They make me honestly and dreadfully ill. Gentlemen, I thank you."

Neil Rogers bowed himself from the room and struck out vigorously with long elastic strides, his athletic shoulders swinging freely, toward his hotel in Fifth Avenue, a smile of accomplishment brightening his dark, plain, regular features. Reaching Washington Square, he sat himself upon a bench, shaded from the summer sun, to meditate upon the past, speculate as to the future and cogitate upon the burdens of magnificent wealth.

"By George, there is material for a play in it," he told himself. "No socialistic, capitalistic rant or twaddle, but a study of the psychological reactions following the possession of too much inherited money." He ruminated a moment longer. "I'll write it—'The Lion's Cage,' by Neil Rogers."

In four days he had sent his valet on a

six months' vacation, notified his friends he contemplated a trip South, engaged a small studio at the edge of the Square, furnished plainly and comfortably with odds and ends picked up in a second-hand emporium in Greenwich Village and advised his bank of his change of address. With wholesome joy he began plotting his play.

After his breakfast each morning, Neil made a practise of strolling to the shaded bench in Washington Square whereon he had originally conceived the idea for his drama. Slumped down on the seat, his long legs outstretched before him, the brim of an old hat pulled far over his eyes, he would outline the day's work, weigh his story, examine his characters and situations and, between periods of intense concentration, revel in the luxury of old clothes and his emancipation from social and financial formality, the while he idly watched the feet of the passer-by.

IT WAS during one of these congratulatory periods of relaxation that Neil saw the feminine ankles which were to cause him his greatest happiness and his keenest disappointment; the ankles, in fact, which determined his future; the ankles through which Nature demonstrated the immutability of her commandment of natural selection.

Remarkable ankles, acknowledged so by Neil upon his first glimpse of them. Trim, silken clad, springily following the four wheels of a baby-carriage, he appreciated them as not alone perfect in their chaste modeling and classic contour, but, withal, expressing an individual beauty that encouraged and at the same time baffled analysis. When, leisurely, gracefully they faded from his lowered vision, Neil wondered with a tinge of sadness if he should ever again see them. There was no denying the exquisite artistic appeal of their elusive loveliness.

The young man was confident that he had not imputed undue credit to their exterior covering. The white silken hose with their slender black clocking were, he felt, but cloaks which masked even while they revealed the pure outlines underlying them. And this judgment was confirmed the ensuing morning when, with a tingle of pleasure, he immediately recognized the shapely ankles despite the sheer, shimmering champagne-colored stockings which clung to them. As the summer wore on, Neil, slumped on the bench, his long legs outstretched before him, his hat-brim pulled far over his eyes, before concentrating upon his day's work, eagerly awaited the passing of the perambulator and the enchanting ankles, much as a race-horse, impatiently dancing at the post, awaits the flash of the starter's flag.

Not once did Neil look at the girl's face. Nurse-maids, however blessed in the matter of ankles, did not interest him particularly. There would be time to admire pretty faces after his play was completed. Furthermore, there was a psychologic charm in his silent, unguessed homage that reacted on his brain as a stimulant, an incentive to accomplish something worthy of—of those perfect ankles.

Being a most human a young man, the life of a literary hermit contained no attraction for Neil. Easily maintaining his incognito, he was accepted as a congenial soul by the geniuses who gathered daily at the Purple Prune Pastry Shop, and he was welcomed at the discussions of Ideas—past, present and future—nightly carried on in the smoke-laden atmosphere of Alice's Attic. All saw in Neil's sincerity that quality which, since the days of Moses, ever has compelled the respect of both the respected and the none-too-respectable.

It was Watson Frayne—Frayne had written and produced seven high-brow and highly unsuccessful plays, thereby qualifying for the post of managing-director of the Neighborhood Theatre wherein the latest models of scenic and dramatic experiments were jealously presented—who, after listening closely to Neil's scenario, stroked his flowing tie and said, "You've a popular success there. If you do it at all decently, you should make a lot of money from it."

"Money!" Neil shouted. "I don't want to make money. I want to point out a few Truths."

"Then change the ending of your play. Your audience will forget all about Truth in the sweetness of your happy ending."

Because the last thing he desired was more money, Neil set himself to the task of devising an unhappy ending. In Shakespeare's plays, he reflected, at least one character almost invariably came to a tragic close before the final curtain. And nobody ever paid to see Shakespeare played. The conclusion was inevitable; one of his characters must die!

But which one—his heroine or his hero? His plot contained no logical reason for the demise of either of them. Furthermore, by what means was the fatality to be consummated? Troublous days and dream-vexed nights passed by uncounted. He neglected his friends, his food, his apparel, even his personal appearance in his quest for an appropriate unhappy ending.

One crisp October morning, unshaven, unkempt, pale, a weather-beaten hat jammed over his eyes, Neil sat slumped on his favorite bench in the Square, his hands fumbling semiconsciously for a match with which to relight the cigaret between his lips. It was ridiculous, he told himself, the time he was wasting. If only he might discuss his perplexity with some intelligent stranger who, viewing the problem with a fresh mind, might suggest a new angle on which to work; some one with delicacy of feeling and instinct; some one possessing perceptions as finely and cleanly drawn as—as were the lines of the ankles he was momentarily expecting to see.

Which reminded Neil of another puzzle he had elected to solve. As September had succeeded August, gray, brown and black hose had supplanted the lighter fancy silks of summer. Although no color nor design had been able to thwart Neil's daily recognition of the lovely ankles following the baby-carriage, he had often whimsically wondered whether he could identify them if, some sharp windy morning, they should be heartlessly encased in high-topped shoes! He thought he could. Without doubt this raw morning would settle the matter.

The wheels of a perambulator revolved slowly into his restricted area of sight. Neil smiled in gratification. Above a neatly fitted pair of sturdy little Oxfords he detected the trim ankles in snug woolen hose. But this morning, instead of passing on, the perambulator stopped in front of the bench. One of the smart feet pressed the brake attachment on the rear axle. Then the girl sat beside him, on his right, and softly humming, gracefully crossed one knee over the other and opened the crackling pages of a magazine.

Everybody's Magazine, October, 1921

Neil stole a swift glance at her profile—and immediately decided it would be an act of wanton vandalism to destroy the heroine of his play.

A stout Italian woman with thick ankles and shapeless feet settled herself on the bench at Neil's left. She divided her attention and her breath between the fussy infant she was holding and another child busily rehearsing a mode of locomotion which consisted of three staggers, a fall, a yell, a return to an upright position—and repeat.

"On second thought, the woman must die," mused Neil. And then realizing his problem was still unsolved and his solitude dissipated, he groaned aloud.

"Are you in trouble?" The nurse-maid's voice was clear, vibrant with ready sympathy; a voice, Neil thought, eminently suited for the expression of sentiments such as it had just uttered.

HE FACED the girl squarely. His first glance had revealed that she was entrancingly beautiful, clean-cut of feature, limpidly brown and tender of eye. His second impression amplified the first. He found it impossible to gainsay the witchery of her mouth, the independence of her straight nose and firm chin or the lure of her rebellious soft-curling hair escaping from the tam-o'-shanter matching the sweater coat and short walking-skirt which outlined her small, boyishly slender figure.

"I beg your pardon," the girl murmured, coloring under Neil's enchanted scrutiny.

"Please don't," he hastily apologized. "You're quite right. I am in trouble. Worst of it is I have no one to talk to. I dislike to consult my friends about it. They are all so positive in their opinions and assertions—but no two of them think alike. If I only had some one to talk to!"

The girl regarded him with compassionate eyes. "Please don't think me forward, but if you'd really enjoy talking to—some one—any one—" she hesitated, invitingly embarrassed.

"May I?" Eagerly. The girl nodded.

"Oh, thanks!" Neil brushed his hand across the unlovely stubble on his chin. "The trouble is I can't decide which of two people to kill."

The stout Italian woman hurriedly crossed herself, gurgled a prayer and precipitately departed.

The nurse-girl caught her breath sharply, stared a startled second into Neil's harassed eyes, and then, as though soothing a pampered child, she said, "I understand exactly how you feel. There are so many people in the world who should be killed, aren't there?"

"Do you believe that, too?"

"I personally know ever so many. If I had to decide which should be the first to go, I know I'd worry as much as you."

Warming under the subtle inward glow which an appreciative listener emotionally in tune with the artist alone can create, Neil rapidly continued. "If I kill the woman, every one will sympathize with the man. And he doesn't deserve it. He's not a real hero. He's a bank-clerk. On the other hand, if I murder the man, all the sympathy will go to the woman. Which would be unethical because she's a wealthy society leader."

"A dreadful dilemma," comforted the girl. "I—I don't suppose it would do to—to kill them both."

"I've thought of that, but I can't. If I kill them both, there will be nobody left to get the sympathy, and without sympathy what becomes of my play?"

"Play!" The girl's tight grip on the magazine relaxed. "Oh, I see. Of course, one can't be too careful how one treats the characters in a play."

"Exactly. But there's worse ahead of me. After I decide on whom to kill, I must determine the method of the murder. People have been killing other people for so many thousands of years that it is practically impossible to invent a way that is new and at the same time effective."

"Effective?"

"Dramatically."

"But is it necessary that either the bank-clerk or the society woman be—done away with?"

"I must have an unhappy ending in order to insure against popularity. You see, I want to tell the Truth about money."

The girl glanced curiously at the carelessly dressed young man beside her. "The Truth about money?"

"Yes. My theme, the thought around which I've built my play, is this: that money—its possession and disbursement—is an hereditary curse greater than weak lungs or a strong temper."

"Please go on." The girl was genuinely interested.

"A strong temper can be schooled, weak lungs may be cured; but there is no relief for the young man or woman with inherited money. In the first place, he can not hope to spend it all and retain his self-respect; secondly, the manner of its investment usually precludes his throwing it away, even were he callous enough to disregard the thousands of lives dependent upon those investments; and, thirdly, after a certain amount has been accumulated, it is impossible to give it all away. I tell you, Miss, an income of a million dollars a year is a misfortune!"

"Especially when you haven't it. I'm not joking," the girl earnestly assured Neil. "I don't consider that an heiress, irrespective of the amount of her income, really has money when it is being handled, invested and guarded by a trust company which prohibits her from spending the capital as she wishes."

"My point exactly," delightedly cried Neil. "Under those circumstances all she has are its oppressive responsibilities and the depressing knowledge that some one else is deriving the real enjoyment from her money."

"If some one could only convince millionaire fathers what mortifying yokes they place around the necks of their children by leaving them tremendous fortunes!" sighed the girl.

"THAT is the purpose of my play—to teach precisely that lesson," stated Neil, solemnly, in his eyes the intrepid light with which artists have vivified the countenances of Columbus, Martin Luther and George Washington.

"Would it be asking too much—I mean to say, I'd like awfully well to hear the story of your play. It must be fascinating, Mister——"

"Rogers," Neil quickly supplied the name. "Neil Rogers."

"I am Rowena Moore." The girl frankly extended her hand.

As a result of their subsequent daily conferences, Neil's play progressed and flowered miraculously. The girl's intelligent appreciation and well-chosen criticism were positive and joyous inspiration. And never, never had Neil known any one quite so easy to look upon as Rowena. Shrinking from crudely questioning her, Neil reconciled her occupation with her nicety of thought, speech and manner by inventing a biography in which Miss Moore was the orphaned daughter of cultured but indigent parents whose demise had forced her to follow a remunerative vocation such as private tutor or governess.

THE morning Neil triumphantly achieved an unhappy ending which satisfied both of them, he said gaily, "We must celebrate. Let's have dinner togeth—" He suddenly remembered he was talking to a nurse-maid, a girl whose time belonged to her employer. Still, if she were but half as keen as he for the intimacy of a small dining-table in a noisy café—Neil stumbled on, "If you can manage it—er, that is, if you have no—no other engagement this evening, may I take you to one of the Village restaurants for dinner?"

"Thank you. I should enjoy it tremendously," Rowena answered serenely. "Some cozy little inexpensive café."

Neil glanced sharply at her, wondering if there lay any especial significance in the preference she had expressed. Rowena was intently examining a scuffed spot on her shoe.

"I know several rather nice places," Neil resumed. "And Miss Moore, after dinner I thought—that is, I hope—er, I've meant several times to inquire about your evenings. Can you, I mean, are you free to—hang it all, do you like to go to the theatre?"

A faint flush crept over the girl's face. "I adore good acting, and—and my evenings are my own. But can you honestly enjoy a performance after paying the price for tickets they are demanding this year?"

"I generally sit in the balcony, sometimes in the gallery," Neil glibly lied. Then, endeavoring to pave the way to an entire season of unrestricted play-going with the lovely but thrifty little lady beside him, he shamelessly continued. "Though I can't get passes to first-nights or holiday performances, I am usually able to secure seats at most of the theatres." An income of nine thousand dollars a day can buy many things. "Wouldn't you like to see the new comedy at the Empire to-night?"

"I should love it!" Rowena was radiant. "I'll meet you here, near this bench, at half past six."

Strolling down the Avenue some three weeks later in silent contentment after a modest after-the-theatre lunch, Rowena suddenly asked "You have no work—you are doing no writing except on your play, are you, Neil?"

"No."

"Your expenses go on, just the same."

"Yes."

"I imagined so." Rowena fixed her eyes upon a distant street-lamp. "I—I have some money saved up that I—I really don't need. If—that is, I wish you'd let me help, in case—what I'm trying to say is that I would be altogether ashamed if both of us should you stop work on your play because of lack of funds when I have plenty to tide you over." Her face was scarlet.

"Why, you God-blessed girl!" whispered Neil, utterly dumfounded. "You wonderful creature!" Blinking back the unexpected moisture that blurred his vision, he tried to swallow the lump in his throat. The realization that the little woman at his side had faith in him sure enough to willingly offer the pennies scrimped and hoarded against a day of unemployment created a riot of emotions entirely new to him. It was the first time in his recollection that any one had made a sacrifice for him. "I'll never forget this as long as I live," he managed to say, drawing the girl closer to him.

"Don't be silly, Neil," Rowena gently chided. "Will you let me help?"

Neil opened his mouth to tell her the truth concerning himself; then stopped abruptly. To refuse her aid with the humiliating explanation that for every dollar she might offer he possessed a hundred thousand of his own was unthinkable. Also, there popped into his mind the disquieting possibility that, frankly fond of her comradeship and association with Neil Rogers, moneyless playwright, Rowena might in no wise be attracted to Neil Rogers, multimillionaire. Which prospect, also, was unthinkable!

"Rowena," Neil said unsteadily, "when I need your help I'll not hesitate to ask it. Some time ago a—a relative of mine died, leaving me enough money to cover my expenses for a while. When that is gone, I promise to come to you."

Rowena breathed long and deeply. "I'm so happy," she smiled.

At the basement door of the exclusive apartment house where Rowena nightly permitted Neil to escort her, she inquired, "When will your play be finished?"

"This week, surely."

"Then what are you going to do with it?"

"I— By George, I hadn't planned that far," the author was forced to admit.

"Neil!" Rowena's dark eyes opened wide in astonishment. "Don't you know it will have to be produced before the public can appreciate it?"

"I know," Neil frowned. "But who among the Broadway theatrical managers will produce a play with an unhappy ending?"

Rowena studied the situation. "We might find a philanthropist——"

"Pardon, dear," Neil interrupted. "The villain of my play is a philanthropist."

"How stupid of me," Rowena scolded. With an unexpected change of mood her eyes gleamed through their long lashes. "Do you think Frayne might show it at the Neighborhood?"

"Frayne! I never thought of him."

"Why don't you see him—to-morrow afternoon—after you finish working?" Rowena urged excitedly.

"I will. He knows the story—likes it, too. I've heard that the funds of the organization are a bit low at present, but——"

"I'm sure they will find there are sufficient." The soft folds of charmeuse draped demurely over Rowena's bosom undulated restlessly. "*Do* see him, Neil. I—I just *know* he will produce your play!"

"I know the ending will please him," Neil replied.

SAUL HOWARDSON, famed the length of Broadway for his productions of theatrical novelties, seldom missed a premier at the Neighborhood. At the close of the initial performance of "The Lion's Cage" he pushed through the group of Villagers congratulating Neil.

"Mr. Rogers," Howardson drove direct to his objective, "I'd like to purchase the producing rights of your play. How much do you want?"

Neil gasped in amazement. "You—you want *my* play?"

"Yes."

"But it has an unhappy ending."

"I know it. Will the usual advance royalty and contract be acceptable?"

"Why, yes—of course. But—but it must be stipulated in the contract that my last act be played as written."

"I will guarantee that every word in your last act manuscript shall be spoken. Is that satisfactory?"

Neil nodded, dazed.

"Here is my check for a thousand. I'll send contracts for your approval tomorrow."

His head still swimming, his thoughts disjointed and confused, his nerves taut from the strain of the evening, Neil repeated to Rowena his conversation with Howardson as the two made a pretense of lunching behind a large Japanese screen in one corner of the Turnip Top.

"It's Providential," Rowena whispered in awe. "Think, Neil! A Broadway production! A play where the world may see it!"

"Provided the world hurries," amended Neil. "Even Howardson won't keep it going unless it shows a profit, and our play has no popular appeal."

Rowena leaned forward, her body tense. "Neil, promise me you will never change that ending—no matter what happens!"

"If you wish it, I promise, little lady," replied Neil, at a loss to account for her insistent eagerness.

Rowena's muscles slowly relaxed.

"Mind telling me why?" Neil asked.

The girl brushed a scalding tear from her soft cheek. Lover-like, Neil reached for her hand. Woman-like, she tried to draw it away. Neil held fast. Another tear slipped from under the long lashes. Neil raised her little hand to his lips.

"Rowena," he begged, "will you marry me? I've wanted to ask you for a long time. I—I can't imagine living any longer without you. You've become so great a part of me—my thoughts, my writing, my daily life—that without you to believe and trust in me I can do nothing. Do you care enough for me to go with me through life? I need you, sweetheart. But more than that, I want you."

Rowena, head bent over the table, remained motionless a breathless second. Slowly she raised her eyes to his.

"I've been waiting for this moment, it seems, for years."

"You mean——"

"Yes."

Frayne was best man at the wedding. The bride was unattended.

Six weeks later "The Lion's Cage" opened at the Lyric. Stupefied, Neil and Rowena listened to the laughter and applause of the enthusiastic audience, laughter and applause elicited by the words Neil had placed in the mouths of his characters; and yet they were not his words nor characters!

By the simple expedient of inserting a short scene at the beginning of the play, Howardson planted the suspicion that the two principal characters were mildly lunatic. From that point on, by adroit inflections and unexpected accentuations, Neil's blunt preachments became keen-edged shafts of satire, verging at moments on broad travesty; his radical financial theories became the vaporings of mentally unsound but delightful cranks. And the entrance of two uniformed attendants immediately following the tragedy of the play showed the action of the drama to be merely the delusion of a disordered mind.

The curtain descended amid a gale of laughter and hand-clapping. "Delicious!" was the word on every tongue. First-nighters congratulated themselves on witnessing an instantaneous hit in the making.

"An outrage—a despicable crime!" sobbed Rowena. "You must stop it."

Neil groaned. "I can't. Howardson drew the contract with just this in view. And I've accepted advance royalties. There is no stopping it now. Oh, the disgrace—the shame! Author of a popular success!" Suddenly, in a burst of agony as the full significance of his plight struck him, "Good God, the *money* I'll make!"

Rowena's face blanched. "Money!"

"I get ten per cent. of the gross receipts over ten thousand dollars per week. A popular success, to be popular, must play to at least fourteen thousand a week."

"Neil, dear!" With trembling fingers Rowena drew her husband to the edge of the sidewalk, out of the stream of traffic. "Do you mean you will receive fourteen hundred dollars every week 'The Lion's Cage' is played?"

"At least," Neil confirmed in woebegone accents. "It will probably run for an entire season here in New York. Then add to that the royalties from three or four road companies, the sale of the moving-picture rights, and the— Taxi!" he shouted. The wife of his bosom had fainted.

Twenty minutes later, Neil opened the door of their studio, groped for the electric switch and turned on the lights. Rowena, leaning weakly against the wall, espied a large envelope which had been pushed under the door. She stooped for it, read the name of the trust company printed in one corner and then her eyes glued to her husband's name, typewritten above their street address.

THE envelope fluttered to the floor as Rowena's hand fluttered to her heart.

"Neil!" He wheeled, affrighted at her tone. "You—you aren't the son of T. B. Rogers, are you?"

Neil's heart leaped wildly. The crisis had come.

"Neil!" His wife's voice rose sharply. "Are you the heir to the Rogers' millions?"

Neil nodded, too ashamed to trust himself to speech.

Rowena raised a tragic face to the chandelier. "Mighty Heaven, what have I done to deserve this!" She threw herself on the couch in an overwhelming paroxysm of grief.

"Sweetheart," Neil humbly pleaded when his apprehensive ministrations had somewhat calmed her, "darling, you *must* tell me what the trouble is."

"What else could it be but money," Rowena moaned. "Last summer when my oldest sister and I—" She dabbed a damp handkerchief to her eyes.

"Your sister?" prompted Neil.

"Mrs. Weldon, the wife of the first vice-president of your trust company."

"Great Scott! You—" heroically the young man strove to suppress his agitation—"you aren't Rowena Moore of the Bethlehem Steel Moores!"

It was Rowena's turn to cover her shamed features with shaking hands.

"But—but the baby in the perambulator!"

"My sister's," Rowena explained in a weary monotone. "I came in to New York last summer to sign some papers which had to do with my receiving more shares of dad's estate. For my own pleasure one day I took the baby for an airing in the

Square. That was the day I saw you!" Her voice warmed in ecstatic recollection. "Slumped on the bench, you looked so intense, so uplifted and aloof, so spiritual—you hadn't shaved for two days—I knew your thoughts must be far removed from such sordid matters as estates and legacies. I felt you were seeing a noble vision."

"I was looking at your ankles, dear. Memorizing them," Neil breathed softly.

"The next day, I asked sister to let me wheel the baby around the Square again. Again you were there. I passed you six times."

"There were no clockings on your stockings that day, honey." Neil tenderly brushed back the hair from his wife's hot forehead.

"As time went on and I saw you each morning, I wondered if you were starving to death. I hoped you were. I saw an opportunity for practical charity. Mr. Chester, the administrator or something of our estate, was forever urging me to spend more of my income. One day when I imagined you must positively be famished, I simply had to sit beside you on the bench."

"You wore a brown tam, brown sweater, brown skirt and brown woolen hose."

"And you groaned. Then I was sure you were dying. So I asked if you were in trouble. When I learned you were a playwright with an unhappy ending, I was overjoyed. You see, dear, I knew the quickest and surest way to spend large sums of money irrevocably is to produce unsuccessful plays. Then I was sorry I had let you think me a common servant."

"Not common, sweetheart. I thought you the brave daughter of an old patrician family whose fortune had been gobbled up by men like—like your father and mine."

Rowena slipped her arm about her husband's bowed shoulders. "The night your play was produced at the Neighborhood—Frayne used only half the money I gave him—will stand out in my memory to my dying hour. I was in the seventh heaven of bliss as the curtain dropped on an unmistakable failure. Don't you see? My chance to do something useful and satisfying with my income was at hand. I planned to pay for an expensive Broadway production. When it had failed sufficiently in New York, I intended to furnish the money for a Chicago failure. After that I was going to take it to Boston and Philadelphia. Every city and township in the whole United States lay spread before me.

"With your play and my money we could keep thousands of actors, stage-hands, musicians, ushers and dramatic critics happily employed. I determined to keep your play going until every millionaire in this country and Canada had seen it, heard its message and understood the handicaps, sorrows and burdens they bequeath their children when they saddle them with unfigurable incomes from incalculable wealth. And after we had exhausted this country, there was all Europe!"

"What a dream! What a magnificent vision!" Neil whispered reverently.

The glad light in Rowena's eyes died. Her voice sank again to a disconsolate monotone. "Then you signed contracts with Howardson and he—he ruined everything!"

"Were the facts known," Neil declared solemnly, "Howardson would take his place in the Hall of Infamy next to Benedict Arnold."

Two saddened hearts sought in silence to console each other.

"Fourteen hundred dollars a week—added to what we already have!" Rowena remarked in emotionally exhausted syllables.

"Our delightful life in the Village—our fifty-cent dinners and gas-plate breakfasts—all at an end," Neil muttered. "Frayne and the rest would never understand. I've cut away from my friends up-town——"

"So have I, dear."

"We'll have to go abroad for a while," Neil stated dolefully. "Perhaps there, away from it all—" Manfully he continued, "The *Imperator* sails Thursday, I think. Let's pack our trunks and——"

"Neil, dear, wouldn't it be more sensible not to take much of anything with us? We might go direct to Paris and there furnish ourselves with entirely new and brighter things. Perhaps by leaving behind every reminder of the sweet dreams we dreamed, we may sooner be able to forget their unhappy ending."

Neil shook his head. "I can't forget that fourteen hundred dollars a week."

"That's what you think, now, Neil. But, honestly, it won't be so hard to spend that—in Paris."

Liliom

Can Human Character be Changed Either by Love or the Fires of Hell? is the Interesting Question Raised by the Author of this Moving Dramatic Legend

By Franz Molnar

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THE world has very generally accepted the poetic statement that there are seven ages of man; but now comes a Hungarian dramatist who, in a play, details seven stages in the life of a city tough, whom he calls "Liliom," the slang term for a "bum." A city rowdy, moral-less and brazen, *Liliom* is the barker for a merry-go-round, owned by a *Mrs. Muskat*, who, in her coarse way, has more than a motherly feeling for him. She is jealous of the girls who come and giggle at his boastfulness; and her sharp eye ferrets out those slim creatures, around whose waists *Liliom* slips an arm as they get on and off the horses and elephants and other animals that usually enliven a carousel. The music of the calliope is life to *Liliom*, and the fact that every one edges near him for his favor, and away from him when he bullies, has not tamed the lad's temper. They hand him carnations as though he were the lord of the place; they laugh at his unseemly jokes; the soldiers slink off at his bidding. His presence means money in the pocket of *Mrs. Muskat.*

Such is the atmosphere of *Liliom's* daily life. And *Mrs. Muskat* could be well satisfied with the thriving of business, were it not for *Julie*, the servant-girl, upon whom *Liliom* smiles with his peculiar favor. She and her friend, *Marie*, are on their way home through a park; they are near a bench. It is evident that *Julie* has been driven off by *Mrs. Muskat* and that there is trouble brewing for her life to come.

MRS. MUSKAT (*entering*): Don't worry, I won't eat you. But there's one thing I want to tell you, my dear: Don't let me catch you in my merry-go-round again. I'll stand for a whole lot; I have to in my business. It makes no difference to me whether my customers are ladies or the likes of you, as long as they pay their money. But when a girl misbehaves herself—out she goes. Do you understand?

JULIE: He put his arm around my waist—the same as he does with all the girls. That's his way.

In the midst of this discussion LILIOM *comes upon the scene, threatening to knock the "blocks" off all the servant-girls who pester him. He is afraid of nothing, of no one, least of* MRS. MUSKAT, *with her threats to discharge him if he allows such as* JULIE *near her carousel again.*

LILIOM: All right, Madam, in that case (*flourishes his cap*) you are respectfully requested to fade away at once. I never beat up a woman yet—except that Schneider woman, and I sent her to the hospital for three weeks—but if Madam don't get out of here this minute, and leave this poor little worm be, I'll hand you a left to the jaw that will last you for the rest of your life.

Under such circumstances, MRS. MUSKAT *"beats it."*

MARIE *takes fright. She sees that* JULIE *is sorry for* LILIOM, *and even though* MARIE *loves a porter, who is important enough to wear a red cap, she fears to lose her position by staying out late. This fear, however, need not disturb her, for* LILIOM *shows by frown and clenched hand and threat that three's a crowd. So* MARIE *leaves, trying her best to take* JULIE *with her—a difficult and unsuccessful task, for the girl is under the spell of the tough, and they both are under the spell of the dark, the gas-lamps, the distant calliope and the confused noises of side-shows.*

LILIOM: Now you are in the same fix I am—fired.

JULIE: Yes.

LILIOM (*whistles softly, then*): Have you got a sweetheart?

JULIE: No.

LILIOM: Don't lie to me.

JULIE: I haven't. If I had, I'd tell you. I've never had one.

LILIOM: Go on, tell that to some one else. You know what you are doing, you do.

JULIE: No I don't, Mister Liliom.

LILIOM: You mean to tell me you don't know why you're sitting here—like this, in the dark, alone with me—You wouldn't have stayed so quick, if you hadn't done it before. What *did* you stay for, anyhow?

JULIE: Because I didn't want to leave you alone.

LILIOM: Ah! stupid! Don't worry about my being alone. I can have all of the girls I want. Not only servant-girls like you, but cooks and governesses, even French girls. Twenty, if I want to!

They are awakened from this dream of love by the presence of the police, who have had occasion more than once to know LILIOM *and his record. They warn the girl that she can come to no good with such a man, who is merely jollying her for whatever money she may have. But* JULIE'S *ear is deaf to entreaty. When the officers of the law depart,* LILIOM *is in more sentimental mood than ever. He tells* JULIE *of his past love, and questions her about her own romances. Then—*

LILIOM: Do you love me?

JULIE: No, Mister Liliom.

LILIOM: Suppose I were to say to you—I'll marry you.

JULIE: You?

LILIOM: That frightens you, doesn't it? You're thinking of what the officer said and you're afraid.

JULIE: No, I'm not, Mister Liliom. Let him say what he wants, for all I care——

LILIOM: Maybe, after all, a good-for-nothing, lazy bum might have the making of a man in him.

JULIE: I think so, Mister Liliom. (*They are silent again.*)

Thus, in the silence, the doom of these two is sealed. And together they go out into the world to poverty and uncertain days. For LILIOM, *the bully, drifts and idles and contents himself with living on the scraps of the Hollunder family, whose hovel is some sort of a photographer's "studio," and a squalid home for the two. Twice the police have been on the heels of* LILIOM *for beating up the town, but each time he has been too sly for them and has escaped being fined. He sponges on hard-working folk; Widow Hollunder growls, but still she gets the young couple everything they need. And* LILIOM, *meanwhile, falls into bad company, the evil genius of which is* THE SPARROW, *a grizzle-bearded derelict.* MARIE, *who calls on* JULIE, *learns all this; in her way comes happiness, in the shape of her "man," her ideal love.*

This is far different from the life being lived by JULIE *and* LILIOM; *blows have passed between them, and* JULIE *is a dumb creature, powerless and faithful. He's a bad egg, he's* LILIOM, *and every one skirts round him in fear of his fist. But* JULIE *insists "He's unhappy because he isn't working. That's really why he hit me." It is at this moment that* LILIOM *enters and* JULIE *tells him that she wishes to speak to him. He is in no temper to listen, and threatens to beat her if she doesn't get out. But she insists.*

JULIE: You can hit me again if you like—you needn't look at me like that. I'm not afraid of you—I'm not afraid of any one. I have something to tell you——

LILIOM (*getting his coffee and sipping it*): Well?

JULIE: Yesterday my head ached——

LILIOM: Are you sick?

JULIE: No— But you wanted to know what my headache came from—and you said I seemed—changed— It's awful hard to tell—but you'll have to know sooner or later—I'm not a bit scared—because it's a perfectly natural thing——

LILIOM (*putting his coffee-cup on the table*): What——

JULIE: I'm going to have a baby. (*She exits swiftly.*)

LILIOM *stands dazed; a feeling of pride swells his being and he calls to his pal,* THE SPARROW, *who is always slinking outside. At first* LILIOM *will have nothing to do with his dumb-headed companion; he brushes the thought of* MRS. MUSKAT *aside. He is exalted, in his bum way. Every one must know that* JULIE *is going to have a baby. Then comes to him the thought of money—the need of it at such a time—and* THE SPARROW *now comes in handy! How often has that good-for-nothing represented to* LILIOM *the easy means of getting from others what is* *needed. He calls* The Sparrow. *"Come back later," he says, "and we'll talk the plan over." Thus, at the point where he might pull himself together,* Liliom *prepares to go farther downward in the slough of his life.*

For what has The Sparrow *in the back of his despicable brain? Nothing more than to hold up the cashier of the leather factory on pay-day—to relieve him of his bag of salaries and to deprive the poor beggar of his life.* Liliom *must stop him, enquire the time, while he,* The Sparrow, *discusses the issue with a sharp knife poked between the cashier's ribs. They will divide, half and half, the sixteen thousand kronen. It'll be a big haul, and they can go to America, where the baby can be born. This is what* The Sparrow *unfolds to* Liliom, *and* Julie *is suspicious of something of the kind. All the while that* Liliom *is maneuvering to steal the carving-knife which he might need in the new "business," she stands by, but he is too clever for her, and, though weak in heart at times,* The Sparrow *keeps him to the point. "What will happen to me in the other world?" asks* Liliom, *who wishes to play safe here and hereafter.*

The Sparrow (*impatiently*): What do you mean—afterward?

Liliom: In the other world—when I see God—what'll I say then?

The Sparrow: The likes of us will never see Him.

Liliom: Why not?

The Sparrow: Were you ever hauled up before the Supreme Court?

Liliom: No.

The Sparrow: Our kind only comes up before the police magistrate—and the highest *we ever* get to is the Criminal Court.

Liliom: And do you think it is the same up there?

The Sparrow: Just the same up there. We'll come up before a police magistrate.

Liliom: A police magistrate?

The Sparrow: Sure. For the rich people—the Heavenly Court. For us dirty bums only a police magistrate. For the rich—fine music and angels. For us——

Liliom: FOR us?

The Sparrow: For us, my son, there's only justice. In the next world there'll be lots of justice, yes, nothing but justice. And where there's justice there must be police magistrates; and where there're police magistrates, people like us get——

This does not comfort Liliom; *his heart thumps as loud as ever. And* Julie, *before he goes out, makes him show her what he has under his coat. He deftly hands her out a pack of cards, while the knife lies burning in his arm. When he leaves, he goes to his destruction; no fate can turn him from the end. All the while* Marie *and her* Wolf *are having their pictures taken in the "studio" you feel the awful rushing, toward disastrous end, of the life of* Liliom *and* Julie.

And so, in the fields on the outskirts of the city, just where a railroad embankment shows the shining rails pointing toward Vienna and the lone arm of a signal-tower, Liliom *and* The Sparrow *await their victim, rehearsing what they will do, and gambling to pass the time. And what has* Liliom *to stake in the game? His share of the cashier's bundle of notes. Excitement must be kept at a pitch, nerves must be steadied—at such a moment as this* Liliom *holds lightly the money—and holds more lightly still his own life.* The Sparrow *can cheat at cards and put it all over* Liliom *in such a strenuous mood. The boy loses everything he's going to get by the murder. The cashier enters, at his side a leather bag slung from his shoulder.* The Sparrow *coughs warningly, moves to the right between* Linzman *and the embankment, pauses just behind* Linzman *and follows him.* Liliom *stands bewildered a few paces to the left of the railroad ties. He finds himself facing the cashier.*

Liliom (*trembling in every limb*): Good evening. I beg pardon, sir, what time is it? The Sparrow *springs silently at* Linzman, *the little knife in his right hand, and with his left forces the cashier to his knees. Simultaneously* Linzman *thrusts his right hand into his coat pocket and produces a revolver which he points at* Liliom's *breast. There is a long pause.*)

Linzman (*in a low, even voice*): It is twenty-five minutes past six. (*Looks ironically at* The Sparrow.) It's lucky I grabbed the hand with the knife instead of the other one. (*Looks appraisingly from one to the other.*) Two fine birds! (*To* Liliom.) I advise you to keep quiet. One move and you'll get two bullets in you.

Such games as these two bums play do not always turn out successfully, and cashiers do not always pass by at the accustomed time. It happened that Linzman *had been to the mill and now was here with the police near.* The Sparrow *escapes, but* Liliom, *making a*

A portrait study of Eva Le Gallienne, leading woman in "Liliom."

Photos by Ira Schwarz

The Sparrow (played by Dudley Digges) sneering at *Mrs. Muskat* (played by Helen Westley): "I won't speak to you—you're too common."

Eva Le Gallienne as *Julie*, whose love for *Liliom* not even his brutality and worthlessness could kill.

Photos by Ira Schwartz

Liliom (played by Joseph Schildkraut) to *Louise* (played by Evelyn Chard) "*Pst!* A star—please, my dear—I must do something good."

spring for the embankment, is outlined in such a way as to be seen by every one. Now the police will catch him! No, not if he can help it. He takes the carving-knife and gives himself a deadly thrust. His face is uplifted to the sky; he gives a defiant laugh. "JULIE, *little girl*—" *he murmurs, as he rolls from the embankment.*

It is LILIOM, *therefore, who must be carried back to the "studio" where* MARIE *and* WOLF *are having their pictures taken; and where* JULIE, *with forebodings in her heart, watches silently and hollow-eyed. Two workmen bring him on a stretcher. The doctor will follow. Left alone with the boy,* JULIE *clasps the hand stretched out to her.*

LILIOM (*raising himself with difficulty and speaking softly, first in joke, but later soberly, defiant*): Listen, Julie—there's something I want to tell you—I beat you—not because I was mad at you—no—only because I could not bear to see you crying— You always cried—on my account—and, well, you see—I never learned a trade— But anyhow—I wasn't going back to the carousel to fool with the girls— No, hang it all—understand?

JULIE: Yes.

LILIOM: I didn't give you anything—no home—not even enough to eat— But you don't understand—I'm really no good—but I couldn't be a caretaker and so I thought maybe it would be better over there—in America—do you see? I won't say I'm sorry—I won't do that—I won't—Tell the baby—if you want to.

JULIE: Yes.

LILIOM: Tell the baby—I was no good—but tell him—tell him—I thought perhaps—over in America— But you don't care about that— If it's a boy—if it's a girl—perhaps I'll see God to-day— Do you think I'll see Him?

JULIE: Yes.

LILIOM: I'm not afraid—of the police Up There—if they'll only let me appear before God Himself—not like down here where an officer stops you at the door—

JULIE: Yes.

LILIOM: Julie—hold my hand tight.

JULIE: I'm holding it tight—all the time.

LILIOM: Tighter, tighter—Liliom has—(*Pauses.*) Julie——

JULIE: Liliom! (*He sinks slowly back and dies.*)

So the poor little expectant mother is left alone with her bitter memories and uncertain expectations.

JULIE: Liliom, Liliom—I never told you, never; now I'll tell you—now I'll tell you—you thoughtless, cruel, wicked, dear Liliom. Sleep in peace—They can't understand how I feel—I can't even explain to you—not even to you—how I feel. You'd only laugh at me—but now you can't hear your Julie any more. It was wrong of you to beat me—on the breast—on the head—in the face—but now, sleep in peace, you wicked, wicked boy—I love you—I love you—I love you—I never told you—I was so ashamed— But now I've told you—and still I'm ashamed—so ashamed. Now, sleep—Liliom, sleep.

She leaves him on the stretcher. But all is not at an end with LILIOM. *There come to him, dead, two men in black, their faces illumined by a violet ray. They are from the Municipal Court of Heaven; they have come to arrest* LILIOM. *He is to be tried above.* THE SPARROW *is right. There is a long way to travel before facing God.*

So LILIOM *passes into the Beyond a prisoner, even as he passed so much of his life on earth, and he finds himself in the courtroom. Through the window can be seen rose-tinted clouds, and there is a grated door to one side which is ominous—forbidding. This is the Division for Suicides. There are A Richly Dressed Man and A Poorly Dressed Man waiting the Magistrate's decree. He is bald, with a long white beard—just such a judge as children imagine God to be. He dispenses decisions on the two waiting victims. One has been to earth and has redeemed himself by doing a good deed. The other has been purged by fire and now wishes to be sent earthward that he may be bettered by good service.* LILIOM *views the proceedings with superciliousness. His time now comes.*

MAGISTRATE: What good did you do on earth? (LILIOM *is silent.*) Why did you take your life? (LILIOM *does not answer. The* MAGISTRATE *addresses the* FIRST POLICEMAN.) Take that knife away from him. It will be returned to you if you return to earth. Don't you know that your wife is going to be a mother?

LILIOM: Yes.

MAGISTRATE: And that the child, too, will be without food or shelter? Do you not even regret that?

Liliom: No. Now that I'm gone, what's that to me?

Magistrate: Don't try to deceive me. I see through you as through a pane of glass.

Liliom: If you see so much, why do you ask me? Why don't you let me rest—in peace?

Magistrate: First you must earn your rest.

Liliom: All I want is sleep.

Magistrate: Your obstinacy won't help you, Liliom. Here patience is as endless as Time. We can wait.

Liliom: Please, your Honor—I'd like to know—if your Honor will tell me—is the baby going to be a boy or a girl.

Magistrate: You shall see that for yourself.

Liliom (*excitedly*): I'll see the baby?

Magistrate: When you do, it won't be a baby any more. But we haven't reached that point yet.

Liliom: I'll see it?

Magistrate: You cruelly deserted your wife and child; you were a bad husband and a bad father. Again I ask you, do you repent?

Liliom: I couldn't work at anything—and I couldn't bear to see Julie always—always——

Magistrate: Crying. Why are you ashamed to say it? You couldn't bear to see her crying. Why are you afraid of that word? And why are you ashamed to admit that you loved her?

Liliom (*shrugs his shoulders*): Who's ashamed? But I couldn't bear to see it—and that's why I was bad to her——

Magistrate: Do you not regret?

Liliom (*with a stare*): I don't regret anything.

Magistrate: Liliom, Liliom, it will be difficult to help you.

Liliom: I'm not asking for help.

Magistrate: If I said to you now: Liliom, go back to your stretcher on which you died. To-morrow morning you will arise alive and well again. Would you be willing to be a caretaker?

Liliom: No.

Magistrate: Why not?

Liliom: Because—because that's just why I died.

Magistrate: That is not true, my son. You died because you loved a poor little girl and the child she was carrying under her heart.

Liliom: No——

Magistrate: Liliom, you must remain for fifteen years in the cleansing flames until your child is full grown. By that time your pride and stubbornness will probably have been burnt out of you. And when your daughter——

Liliom: My daughter!

Magistrate: When your daughter will have reached the age of fifteen, you will go down to earth for a single day—to see how the purification of your soul has progressed.

Liliom: Then I'll have to show what I can do?

Magistrate: Yes—it is a test. Now I bid you farewell— After you have returned from earth you will again stand before me. Take heed and think of some good deed to do for your child— On that will depend which of these doors will be open to you. Now go, Liliom!

The glow from the open door is so strong as to blind Liliom; *he takes a step backward, but he knows he faces the inevitable, and so he goes with his eyes near blinded, into the light.*

All through the fifteen years of Julie's *motherhood,* Liliom *is being cleansed, and now the day arrives when she and her daughter,* Louise, *are thriving modestly by work at the factory.* Marie *prospers with a prosperous husband, and takes on all the airs of the well-to-do. In a tiny garden before the house, the Policemen leave* Liliom *to stand his final test on earth. He watches his wife and child at their frugal meal.*

Liliom: God bless you.

Louise: You, too.

Julie: Another beggar. What do you want, my poor man?

Liliom: Nothing— Is that your daughter?

Julie: Surely.

Liliom: Are you m— (*To* Louise.) Are you the daughter?

Louise: Yes, sir.

Liliom: A sweet, lovely girl. (*Takes the soup she hands him, and touches her with his hand.*)

Louise: Mother!

Julie: What's the matter, my child?

Louise: The man tried to take hold of me.

Everybody's Magazine, October, 1921

JULIE: Nonsense! Sit down and eat your soup. (*They eat.*)

LILIOM: Your husband works at the mill?

JULIE (*after a pause*): I have no husband. I'm a widow.

LILIOM: Your husband—I suppose he's been dead a long time. (JULIE *does not answer.*) I said your husband—he's been dead a long time?

JULIE: A long, long time.

LILIOM: What did he die of?

LOUISE: No one knows. He went to America to work and he died there—in a hospital. Poor father, I never saw him.

LILIOM: He went to America?

LOUISE: Yes, before I was born.

Maybe, says LILIOM *to* JULIE, *I have met him in my wanderings. But if so how different the picture from the one in the mind of his daughter!*

LOUISE: Surely he must have been a good man, wasn't he?

LILIOM: He wasn't so awfully good either. As far as I know he was what they called a barker, a happy-go-lucky fellow, full of tricks— But he was really a bully, too, my dear child. He'd pick a fight with anybody. He even hit your dear little mother.

JULIE: That's not true!

LILIOM: Oh, yes it is!

JULIE: Aren't you ashamed to tell the child such awful things about her father?—Take that dish, Louise, and let him go.

LILIOM: So he didn't hit you?

JULIE: No, never. He was always good to me——

LILIOM: Don't chase me away, little girl, let me come in for just a minute—just long enough to let me show you something pretty, something wonderful. (*Takes from his pocket a big red handkerchief in which is wrapped a glittering star from heaven.*)

LOUISE: What's that?

LILIOM: *Pst!* A star! (*With a gesture he indicates the heavenly constellation.*)

JULIE (*sternly*): Don't let him give you anything. He's sure to have stolen it. (*To* LILIOM.) For God's sake, go!

LILIOM: My dear—please, my dear—I must show you something beautiful—er—do something good.

LOUISE (*pointing with her right hand*): Go. (LILIOM *suddenly slaps her extended hand, and the blow resounds loudly.*)

LOUISE (*bewildered*): Mother—this man—I told him to go away—he hit me—on the hand—hard—very hard, mother—but it didn't hurt at all—mother—it didn't hurt—it was just as if some one had stroked my hand very gently. (LILIOM *looks at* JULIE.)

JULIE (*softly*): Go inside, my child. (*After* LOUISE *leaves, she turns to* LILIOM.) You struck my child.

LILIOM: Yes—I struck her.

JULIE: Is that what you came for, to strike my child?

LILIOM: No—I didn't come for that—but I did hit her—and now I'm going back.

JULIE: Who are you?

LILIOM (*simply*): A poor, tired beggar, who has come a long way, who was hungry and took your soup and your bread and struck your child. Are you angry?

JULIE (*her hand on her heart. Fearfully, wonderingly*): Jesus protect me—I don't understand it—I'm *not* angry—I can't be angry——

LILIOM *goes to the doorway and leans against the post.* JULIE *sits at the table.*

JULIE: Liliom! (LOUISE *returns.*)

LOUISE: What was it that happened to us, mother?

JULIE: Nothing, my child. (*The* HEAVENLY POLICEMEN *appear and* LILIOM *walks off, the two guards shaking their heads deploringly. It is easily seen that there is but one future for* LILIOM, *who could do no good deed on earth.*)

LOUISE: Dear, darling mother, why don't you tell me?

JULIE: What is there to tell you, child? Nothing has happened. We sat here, eating our meal, and a beggar came who talked of bygone days, and then I thought of your father——

LOUISE: Mother dear—*tell* me—how can any one hit you hard like that and not hurt you—how is that possible?

JULIE: It is possible, my child—that some one might strike you and even beat you and beat you and not hurt you at all.

So, this is the legend of LILIOM *and how, given a chance, he could not save his own soul. And it is the miracle of a woman, whose way it is to love, even though the soul of the man is not worth loving.*

The play in November EVERYBODY'S—out October 15—will be "Nice People" by Rachel Crothers, a startling picture of how the youngsters of to-day are conducting themselves.

The Red House Murder

While Cayley and the Inspector Drag the Pond, Antony, with Sinister Forebodings, Explores the Secret Passage

By A. A. Milne

Author of "Once On a Time," "Mr. Pim Passes By," etc.

Illustrations by George Giguère

ANTONY GILLINGHAM was sure not only that Matthew Cayley's theory of the murder of his uncle, Mark Ablett, of the Red House was false, but that Cayley knew it was false. When Gillingham arrived at the Ablett home to call upon his friend, Bill Beverley, who was a house-party guest there, he had found Cayley banging upon the locked door of the "office" where Mark worked and crying out, "Open the door, open the door!"

The dead man was supposed to be Mark's impecunious brother whom he had not seen for fifteen years. Cayley's theory was that the brothers had quarreled, that Robert had been killed accidentally and that Mark had lost his head and run away. Although not a professional detective, Antony was a close observer and he had a keen mind.

If the shooting was accidental why had Mark been such a fool as to run? Why had Cayley gone the long way around to the "office" window?

If the fleeing man had taken the door-key with him it must have been on the inside of the door. Was it not strange that a key to a room which was not a bedroom should be on the inside of the door?

And was it not stranger still that Cayley had, after Antony had called attention to this, secretly placed the keys to all of the other doors—but one—on the inside?

There were other points that puzzled Antony as he and Bill strolled about the Red House grounds. There was Cayley's relationship to Mark—that of slave to overbearing taskmaster.

And there was the strange situation of the bowling-green, croquet-ground and shed, where the playing tools were kept, in relation to the house itself. Also there was the incident of the ghost. There were stories that Red House was haunted and because any reference to this annoyed Mark, some of the guests, Cayley being the instigator, arranged a joke for the benefit of their host. Miss Norris, an actress and one of the guests, made up as a ghost and appeared on the bowling-green in the evening. Mark was terrified.

Unless there was a secret passage from the house, Miss Norris could not have appeared without being seen long enough in advance to spoil the hoax. In looking for this secret passage that night Antony saw Cayley's black head suddenly rise up from one of the croquet boxes in the shed. In musing over this strange occurrence it suddenly came to him that Cayley had shown more anxiety over getting rid of Miss Norris than any of the other house-party guests. She had been bundled off first.

Why? Because she knew about the secret passage, and if she remained she might talk.

Why again? Because the passage or the mere knowledge of it might provide a clue to the mystery.

"I wonder if Mark's hiding there," thought Antony and he went to sleep.

ANTONY came down in a very good humor to breakfast next morning and found that his host was before him. Cayley looked up from his letters and nodded.

"Any word of Mr. Ablett—of Mark?" said Antony, as he poured out his coffee.

"No. The inspector wants to drag the lake this afternoon."

"Oh! Is there a lake?"

There was just the flicker of a smile on Cayley's face, but it disappeared as quickly as it came.

"Well, it's really a pond," he said, "but it was called 'the lake.' "

"By Mark," thought Antony. Aloud he said, "What do they expect to find?"

"They think that Mark—" He broke off and shrugged his shoulders.

"May have drowned himself, knowing that he couldn't get away? And knowing that he had compromised himself by trying to get away at all?"

"Yes; I suppose so," said Cayley slowly.

"I should have thought he would have given himself more of a run for his money. After all, he had a revolver. If he was determined not to be taken alive, he could always have prevented that. Couldn't he have caught a train to London before the police knew anything about it?"

"He might have got away with it. There *was* a train. They would have noticed him at Woodham, of course, but he might have escaped notice at Stanton. He's not so well known there, naturally. The inspector has been inquiring. Nobody seems to have seen him."

"There are sure to be people who will say they did, later on. There was never a missing man yet but a dozen people came forward who swear to have seen him at a dozen different places at the same time."

Cayley smiled.

"Yes. That's true. Anyhow, he wants to drag the pond first" He added dryly. "From what I've read of detective stories, inspectors always do want to drag the pond first."

"Is it deep?"

"Quite deep enough," said Cayley as he got up.

ANTONY went on with his breakfast. Perhaps it was true that inspectors liked dragging ponds, but the question was did Cayley like having them dragged? Was Cayley anxious about it, or quite indifferent? He certainly did not seem to be anxious, but he could hide his feeling very easily beneath that heavy, stolid face, and it was not often that the real Cayley peeped out. Just a little too eager once or twice, perhaps, but there was nothing to be learnt from it this morning. Perhaps he knew that the pond had no secrets to give up. After all, inspectors were always dragging ponds.

Bill came in noisily.

His face was an open book. Excitement was written all over it.

"Well," he said eagerly, as he sat down to the business of the meal, "what are we going to do this morning?"

"Not talk so loudly, for one thing," said Antony.

Bill looked about him apprehensively. Was Cayley under the table, for example? After last night one never knew.

"Is—er—" He raised his eyebrows.

"No. But one doesn't want to shout. One should modulate the voice, my dear William, while breathing gently from the lips. Thus one avoids those chest-notes which have betrayed many a secret. In other words, pass the toast."

"You seem bright this morning."

"I am. Very bright. Cayley noticed it. Cayley said, 'Were it not that I have other business I would come gathering nuts with thee. Fain would I gyrate round the mulberry-bush and hop upon the little hills. But the waters of Jordan encompass me and Inspector Birch tarries outside with his shrimping-net. My friend William Beverley will attend thee anon. Farewell, a long farewell to all thy grape-nuts.' He then left up-center. Enter W. Beverley, R."

"Are you often like this at breakfast?"

"Almost invariably," said he with his mouth full. "Exit W. Beverley, L."

"It's a touch of the sun, I suppose," said Bill, shaking his head sadly.

"It's the sun and the moon and the stars, all acting together on an empty stomach. Do you know anything about the stars, Mr. Beverley? Do you know anything about Orion's Belt, for instance? And why isn't there a star called Beverley's Belt? Or a novel? Said he, masticating: 'Re-enter W. Beverley through trap-door.' "

"Talking about trap-doors——"

"Don't," said Antony, getting up. "Some talk of Alexander and some of Hercules, but nobody talks about — what's the Latin for trap-door? *Mensa* — a table, you might get it from that. Well, Mr. Beverley,"—and he slapped him heartily on the back as he went past him—"I shall see you later. Cayley says that you will amuse me, but so far you have not made me laugh once. You must try and be more amusing when you have finished your breakfast. But don't hurry. Let the upper mandibles have time to do the work." With those words Mr. Gillingham then left the spacious apartment."

Bill continued his breakfast with a slightly bewildered air. He did not know that Cayley was smoking a cigaret outside the windows behind him; not listening, perhaps; possibly not even overhearing; but within sight of Antony, who was not going to take any risks. So he went on with his breakfast, reflecting that Antony was a queer fellow, and wondering if he had dreamed only of the amazing things which had happened the day before.

Antony went up to his bedroom to fetch his pipe. It was occupied by a housemaid and he made a polite apology for disturbing her. Then he remembered.

"Is it Elsie?" he asked, giving her a friendly smile.

"Yes, sir," she said, shy but proud. She had no doubts as to why it was that she had achieved such notoriety.

"It was you who heard Mr. Mark yesterday, wasn't it? I hope the inspector was nice to you?"

"Yes, thank you, sir."

" 'It's *my* turn now. You wait,' " murmured Antony to himself.

"Yes, sir. Nasty-like. Meaning to say his chance had come."

"I wonder."

"Well, that's what I heard, sir. Truly."

Antony looked at her thoughtfully and nodded. "Yes. I wonder. I wonder why."

HE WAS glad to have spoken to her, because he had recognized at once the immense importance of her evidence. To the inspector no doubt it had seemed only of importance in that it had shown Mark to have adopted something of a threatening attitude toward his brother. To Antony it had much more significance. It was the only trustworthy evidence that Mark had been in the office at all that afternoon.

But certainly Elsie's evidence did not prove anything more than the mere presence of Mark in the room. "It's my turn now; you wait." That was not an immediate threat; it was a threat for the future. If Mark had shot his brother immediately afterward it must have been an accident, the result of a struggle, say, provoked by that "nasty-like" tone of voice. Nobody would say "You wait" to a man who was going to be shot. "You wait" meant "You wait, and see what's going to happen to you later on." The owner of the Red House had had enough of his brother's sponging, his brother's blackmail; now it was Mark's turn to get a bit of his own back. Let Robert just wait a bit and he would see. The conversation which Elsie had overheard might have meant something like this. It couldn't have meant murder. Anyway not murder of Robert by Mark.

"It's a funny business," thought Antony. "The one obvious solution is so easy and yet so wrong. I've got a hundred things in my head and I can't fit them together. And this afternoon will make a hundred and one. I mustn't forget this afternoon."

He found Bill in the hall and proposed a stroll. Bill was only too ready.

"Where do you want to go?" he asked.

"I don't mind much. Show me the park."

They walked out together.

"William, old man," said Antony, as soon as they were away from the house, "you really mustn't talk so loudly indoors. There was a gentleman outside, just behind you, all the time.

"Oh," said Bill, going pink. "I'm awfully sorry. So that's why you were talking such rot."

"Partly, yes. And partly because I do feel rather bright this morning. We're going to have a busy day."

"Are we really? What are we going to do?"

"They're going to drag the pond—beg its pardon, the lake. Where is the lake?"

"We're on the way to it now, if you'd like to see it."

"We may as well look at it. Do you haunt the lake much in the ordinary way?"

"Oh, no. There's nothing to do there."

"You can't bathe?"

"Well, I shouldn't care to. Too dirty."

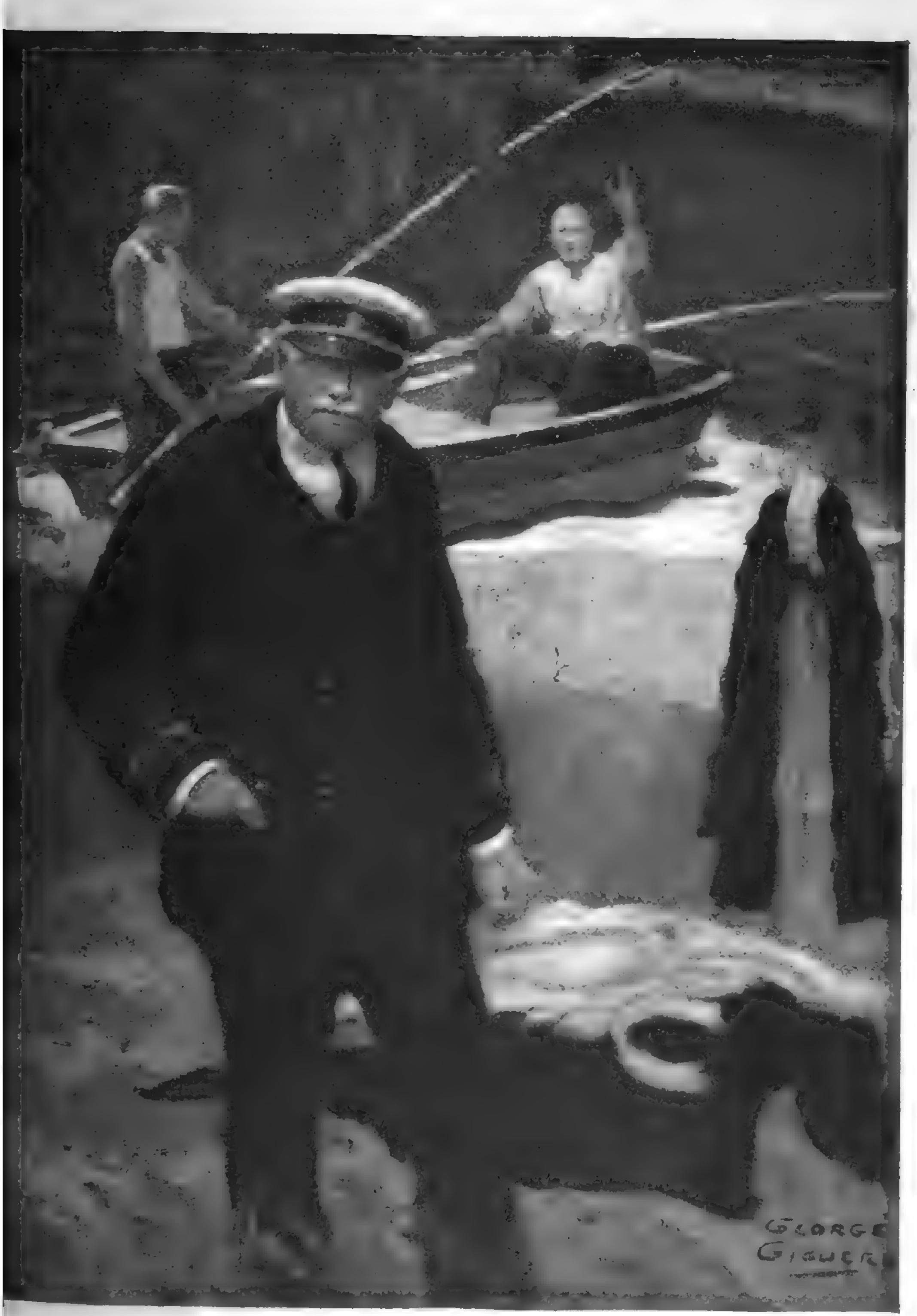
"I see. This is the way we came yesterday, isn't it? The way to the village?"

"Yes. We go off a bit to the left directly. What are they dragging it for?"

"Mark."

"Oh, rot," said Bill uneasily. He was silent for a little and then, forgetting his

"Coming to help us?" asked Inspector Birch. "You can tell me afterward what you found," said Antony
the way, isn't it, for anybody running away?" "That's



with a little shudder. "I wish you luck; but I don't think you'll find much at the pond. It's rather out of just what I told Mr. Cayley when he showed me the pond."

uncomfortable thoughts in his sudden remembrance of the exciting times they were having, said eagerly, "When are we going to look for that passage?"

"We can't do very much while Cayley's in the house."

"What about this afternoon when they're dragging the pond? He's sure to be there."

Antony shook his head.

"There's something I must do this afternoon," he said. "Of course we might have time for both."

"Has Cayley got to be out of the house for the other thing too?"

"Well, I think he ought to be."

"Is it anything exciting?"

"I don't know. It might be rather interesting. I daresay I could do it at some other time, but I rather fancy it at three o'clock, somehow. I've been specially keeping it back for then."

"What fun! You do want me, don't you?"

"Of course I do. Only, Bill—don't talk about things inside the house, unless I begin."

"I won't. I swear I won't."

THEY had come to the pond—Mark's lake—and they walked silently round it. When they had made the circle, Antony sat down on the grass and relit his pipe. Bill followed his example.

"Well, Mark isn't there," said Antony.

"No," said Bill. "At least, I don't quite see why you know he isn't."

"It isn't 'knowing,' it's 'guessing,'" said Antony rapidly. "It's much easier to shoot yourself than to drown yourself, and if Mark had wanted to shoot himself in the water, with some idea of not letting the body be found, he'd have put big stones in his pockets, and the only big stones are near the water's edge, and they would have left marks, and they haven't, and therefore he didn't and—oh, bother the pond; that can wait till this afternoon. Bill, where does the secret passage begin?"

"Well, that's what we've got to find out, isn't it?"

"Yes. You see, my idea is this."

He explained his reasons for thinking that the secret of the passage was concerned in some way with the secret of Robert's death, and went on:

"My theory is that Mark discovered the passage about a year ago—the time when he began to get keen on croquet. The passage came out into the floor of the shed, and probably it was Cayley's idea to put a croquet box over the trap-door, so as to hide it more completely. You know, when once you've discovered a secret yourself, it always seems as if it must be so obvious to everybody else. I can imagine that Mark loved having this little secret all to himself—and to Cayley, of course, but Cayley wouldn't count—and they must have had great fun fixing it up, and making it more difficult for other people to find out. Well then, when Miss Norris was going to dress up, Cayley gave it away. Probably he told her that she could never get down to the bowling-green without being discovered and then, perhaps, showed that he knew there was one way in which she could do it, and she wormed the secret out of him somehow."

"But this was two or three days before Robert turned up."

"Exactly. I am not suggesting that there was anything sinister about the passage in the first place. It was just a little private bit of romance and adventure for Mark, three days ago. He didn't even know that Robert was coming. But somehow the passage has been used since, in connection with Robert. Perhaps Mark escaped that way; perhaps he's hiding there now. And if so, then the only person who could give him away was Miss Norris. And she, of course, would only do it innocently—not knowing that the passage had anything to do with it."

"So it was safer to have her out of the way?"

"Yes."

"But, look here, Tony, why do you want to bother about this end of it? We can always get in at the bowling-green end."

"I know. But if we do that we shall have to do it openly. It will mean breaking open the box and letting Cayley know that we've done it. You see, Bill, if we don't find everything out for ourselves in the next day or two, we've got to tell the police what we have found out, and then they can explore the passage for themselves. But I don't want to do that yet."

"Rather not."

"So we've got to carry on secretly for a bit. It's the only way." He smiled and added, "And it's much more fun."

"Rather!" Bill chuckled to himself.

"Very well, then. Where does the secret passage begin?"

"There's one thing which we have got to realize at once," said Antony, "and that is that if we don't find it easily we sha'n't find it at all."

"You mean that we sha'n't have time?"

"Neither time nor opportunity. Which is rather a consoling thought to a lazy person like me."

"But it makes it much harder, if we can't really look properly."

"Harder to find, yes, but so much easier to look. For instance, the passage might begin in Cayley's bedroom. Well, now we know that it doesn't."

"We don't know anything of the sort," protested Bill.

"We know for the purposes of our search. Obviously we can't go trailing into Cayley's bedroom and tapping his wardrobes, and obviously, therefore, if we are going to look for it at all, we must assume that it doesn't begin there."

"Oh, I see." Bill selected a piece of grass and chewed it thoughtfully. "Anyhow, it wouldn't begin on an upstairs floor, would it?"

"Probably not. Well, we're getting on."

"You can eliminate the kitchen and all that part of the house," said Bill, after more thought. "We can't go there."

"Right. And the cellars, if there are any."

"Well, that doesn't leave us much."

"No. Of course it's only a hundred-to-one chance that we find it, but what we want to consider is which is the most likely place of the few places in which we can look safely."

"All it amounts to," said Bill, "is the living-rooms down-stairs—dining-room, library, hall, and the office rooms."

"Yes, that's all."

"Well, the office is the most likely, isn't it?"

"Yes. Except for one thing."

"What's that?"

"Well, it's on the wrong side of the house. One would expect the passage to start from the nearest place to which it is going. Why make it longer by going under the house first?"

"Yes, that's true. Well, then, you think the dining-room or the library?"

"Yes. And the library for choice. I mean for our choice. There are always servants going into dining-rooms. We shouldn't have much of a chance of exploring properly in there. Besides, there's another thing to remember. Mark has kept this a secret for a year. Could he have kept it a secret in the dining-room? Could Miss Norris have got into the dining-room and used the secret door just after dinner without being seen? It would have been much too risky."

Bill got up eagerly.

"Come along," he said, "let's try the library. If Cayley comes in, we can always pretend we're choosing a book."

Antony got up slowly, took his arm and walked back to the house with him.

THE library was worth going into, passages or no passages. Antony could never resist another person's book-shelves. As soon as he went into a room he found himself wandering round it to see what books the owner read, or, more likely, did not read, but kept for the air which they lent to his house.

"And which is your particular fancy, Bill?" said Antony, looking from one shelf to another. "Or are you always playing billiards?"

"I have a look at Badminton sometimes," said Bill. "It's over in that corner there." He waved a hand.

"Over here?" said Antony, going to it.

"Yes." He corrected himself suddenly. "Oh, no, it's not. It's over there on the right now. Mark had a grand rearrangement of his library about a year ago. It took him more than a week, he told us. He's got such a frightful lot, hasn't he?"

"Now that's very interesting," said Antony, and he sat down and filled his pipe again.

There was indeed a "frightful lot" of books. The four walls of the library were plastered with them from floor to ceiling, save only where the door and the two windows insisted on living their own life, even though an illiterate one. To Bill it seemed the most hopeless room of any in which to look for a secret opening.

"We shall have to take every blessed book down," he said, "before we can be certain that we haven't missed it."

"Anyway," said Antony, "if we take

them down one at a time, nobody can suspect us of sinister designs. After all, what does one go into a library for, except to take books down?"

"But they're such a frightful lot."

Antony's pipe was now going satisfactorily and he got up and walked leisurely to the end of the wall opposite the door.

"Well, let's have a look," he said, "and see if they are so very frightful. Hallo, here's your Badminton. You often read that, you say?"

"If I read anything."

"Yes." He looked down and up the shelf. "Sport and Travel chiefly. I like books of travel, don't you?"

"They're pretty dull as a rule."

"Well, anyhow, some people like them very much," said Antony reproachfully. He moved on to the next row of shelves. "The Drama. The Restoration dramatists. Congreve. You can have Congreve. Still, as you well remark, Bill, many people think he's funny. Shaw, Wilde, Robertson—I like reading plays, Bill. There're not many people who do, but those who do are usually very keen. Let us pass on."

"I say, we haven't too much time," said Bill restlessly.

"We haven't. That's why we aren't wasting any. Poetry. Who reads poetry nowadays? Bill, when did you last read "Paradise Lost?' "

"Never."

"I thought not. And when did Miss Calladine last read 'The Excursion' aloud to you?"

"As a matter of fact, Betty—Miss Calladine—happens to be very keen on—what's the chap's name?"

"Never mind his name. You have said quite enough. We pass on."

He moved on to the next shelf.

"Biography. Oh, lots of it. I love biographies. Are you a member of the Johnson Club? I bet Mark is. 'Memories of Many Courts'—I'm sure Mrs. Calladine reads that. Anyway, biographies are just as interesting as most novels, so why linger? We pass on." He went to the next shelf, and then gave a sudden whistle. "Hallo, hallo!"

"What's the matter?" said Bill rather peevishly.

"Stand back there. Keep the crowd back, Bill. We are getting among it. Sermons, as I live. Sermons. Was Mark's father a clergyman, or does Mark take to them naturally?"

"His father was a parson, I believe. Oh, yes, I know he was."

"Ah, then these are father's books. 'Half-Hours with the Infinite'—I must order that from the library when I get back. 'The Lost Sheep,' 'Jones on the Trinity.' 'The Epistles of St. Paul Explained'—Oh, Bill, we're among it. 'The Narrow Way, being sermons by the Rev. Theodore Ussher'—hal-*lo!*"

"What is the matter?"

"William, I am inspired. Stand by." He took down the Reverend Theodore Ussher's classic work, looked at it with a happy smile for a moment, and then gave it to Bill. "Here, hold Ussher for a bit."

Bill took the book obediently.

"No, give it me back. Just go out into the hall, and see if you can hear Cayley anywhere. Say 'Hallo' loudly, if you do."

Bill went out quickly, listened, and came back. "It's all right."

"Good." He took the book out of its shelf again. "Now then, you can hold Ussher. Hold him in the left hand—so. With the right or dexter hand, grasp this shelf firmly—so. Now, when I say 'Pull,' pull gradually. Got that?"

Bill nodded, his face alight with excitement.

"Good." Antony put his hand into the space left by the stout Ussher, and fingered the back of the shelf. "Pull," he said.

Bill pulled.

"Now just go on pulling like that. I shall get it directly. Not hard, you know, but just keeping up the strain." His fingers went at it again.

And then suddenly the whole row of shelves, from top to bottom, swung gently open toward them.

"Good lord!" said Bill, letting go of the shelf in his amazement.

ANTONY pushed the shelves back, extracted Ussher from Bill's fingers, replaced him, and then, taking Bill by the arm, led him to the sofa and deposited him in it. Standing in front of him, he bowed gravely. "Child's play, dear William," he said; "child's play."

"How on earth——"

Antony laughed happily and sat down on the sofa beside him.

"You don't really want it explained," he said, smacking him on the knee.

"No, but really, Tony——"

"Oh, my dear Bill!" He smoked silently for a little, and then went on: "It's what I was saying just now—a secret is a secret until you have discovered it, and as soon as you have discovered it, you wonder why everybody else isn't discovering it, and how it could ever have been a secret at all. This passage has been here for years, with an opening at one end into the library, and at the other end into the shed. Then Mark discovered it, and immediately he felt that everybody else must discover it. So he made the shed end more difficult by putting the croquet-box there, and this end more difficult by—" he stopped and looked at the other—"by what, Bill?"

"What?"

"Obviously by rearranging his books. He happened to take out 'The Life of Nelson,' or 'Three Men in a Boat,' or whatever it was, and by the merest chance discovered the secret. Naturally he felt that everybody else would be taking down 'The Life of Nelson,' or 'Three Men in a Boat.' Naturally he felt that the secret would be safer if nobody ever interfered with that shelf at all. When you said that the books had been rearranged a year ago—just about the time the croquet-box came into existence—of course I guessed why. So I looked about for the dullest books I could find, the books nobody ever read. Obviously the collection of sermon-books of a mid-Victorian clergyman was the shelf we wanted."

"Yes, I see. But why were you so certain of the particular place?"

"Well, he had to mark the particular place by *some* book. I thought that the joke of putting 'The Narrow Way' just over the entrance to the passage might appeal to him. Apparently it did."

Bill nodded to himself thoughtfully several times. "Yes, that's very neat," he said. "You're a clever devil, Tony."

Tony laughed.

"You encourage me to think so, Bill, which is bad for me, but very delightful."

"Well, come on, then," said Bill, and he got up and held out a hand.

"Come on where?"

"To explore the passage, of course."

Antony shook his head.

"Why not?"

"Well, what do you expect to find there?"

"I don't know. But you seemed to think that we might find something that would help."

"Suppose we find Mark?" said Antony quietly.

"Do you really think he's there?"

"Suppose he is?"

"Well, then, there we are."

ANTONY walked over to the fireplace, knocked out the ashes of his pipe, and turned back to Bill. He looked at him gravely without speaking.

"What are you going to say to him?" he said at last.

"What do you mean?"

"Are you going to arrest him or help him to escape?"

"I—I—well, of course, I—" began Bill, stammering, and then ended lamely, "well, I don't know."

"Exactly. We've got to make up our minds, haven't we?"

Bill didn't answer. Very much disturbed in mind, he walked restlessly about the room frowning to himself, stopping now and then at the newly discovered door and looking at it as if he were trying to learn what lay behind it. Which side was he on, if it came to choosing sides—Mark's or the law's?

"You know, you can't just say, 'oh—er—hallo!' to him," said Antony, breaking rather appropriately into his thoughts.

Bill looked up at him with a start.

"Nor," went on Antony, "can you say, 'This is my friend Mr. Gillingham, who is staying with you. We were just going to have a game of bowls.' "

"All the same," Bill said, "you wanted to find the passage, and now you've found it. Aren't you going into it at all?"

Antony took his arm.

"Let's go outside again," he said. "We can't go into it now, anyhow. It's too risky, with Cayley about. Bill, I feel like you—just a little bit frightned. But what I'm frightened of I don't quite know. Anyway, you want to go on with it, don't you?"

"Yes," said Bill firmly. "We must."

"Then we'll explore the passage this afternoon, if we get the chance. And if we don't get the chance, then we'll try it to-night."

They walked across the hall and out into the sunlight again.

"Do you really think we might find Mark hiding there?" asked Bill.

"It's possible," said Antony. "Either Mark or—" He pulled himself up quickly. "No," he murmured to himself, "I won't let myself think that—not yet, anyway. It's too horrible."

IN THE twenty hours or so at his disposal Inspector Birch had been busy. He had telegraphed to London a complete description of Mark in the brown flannel suit which he had last been seen wearing; he had made inquiries at Stanton as to whether anybody answering to this description had been seen leaving on the four-twenty; and though the evidence which had been volunteered to him had been inconclusive, it made it possible that Mark had indeed caught that train, and had arrived in London before the police at the other end had been ready to receive him. But the fact that it was market-day at Stanton, and that the little town would be more full than usual of visitors, made it less likely that either the departure of Mark by the four-twenty or the arrival of Robert by the two-ten earlier in the afternoon would have been particularly noticed. As Antony had said to Cayley, there would always be somebody ready to hand the police a circumstantial story of the movements of any man in whom the police was interested.

That Robert had come by the two-ten seemed fairly certain. To find out more about him in time for the inquest would be difficult. All that was known about him in the village where he and Mark had lived as boys bore out the evidence of Cayley. He was an unsatisfactory son, and he had been hurried off to Australia; nor had he been seen since in the village. Whether there were any more substantial grounds of quarrel between the two brothers than that the younger one was at home and well-to-do, while the elder was poor and an exile, was not known, nor, as far as the inspector could see, was it likely to be known until Mark was captured.

The discovery of Mark was all that mattered immediately. Dragging the pond might not help toward this, but it would certainly give the impression in court to-morrow that Inspector Birch was handling the case with zeal. And if only the revolver with which the deed was done was brought to the surface, his trouble would be well repaid. "Inspector Birch produces the weapon" would make an excellent headline in the local paper.

He was feeling well satisfied with himself, therefore, as he walked to the pond, where his men were waiting for him, and quite in the mood for a little pleasant talk with Mr. Gillingham and his friend, Mr. Beverley.

He gave them a cheerful "Good afternoon," and added with a smile, "Coming to help us?"

"You don't really want us," said Antony, smiling back at him.

"You can come if you like."

Antony gave a little shudder.

"You can tell me afterward what you found," he said. "By the way," he added, "I hope the landlord at The George gave me a good character."

The inspector looked at him quickly.

"Now, how on earth do you know anything about that?"

Antony bowed to him gravely.

"Because I guessed that you were a very efficient member of the Force."

The inspector laughed.

"Well, you come out all right, Mr. Gillingham. You got a clean bill. But I had to make certain about you."

"Of course you did. Well, I wish you luck. But I don't think you'll find much at the pond. It's rather out of the way, isn't it, for anybody running away?"

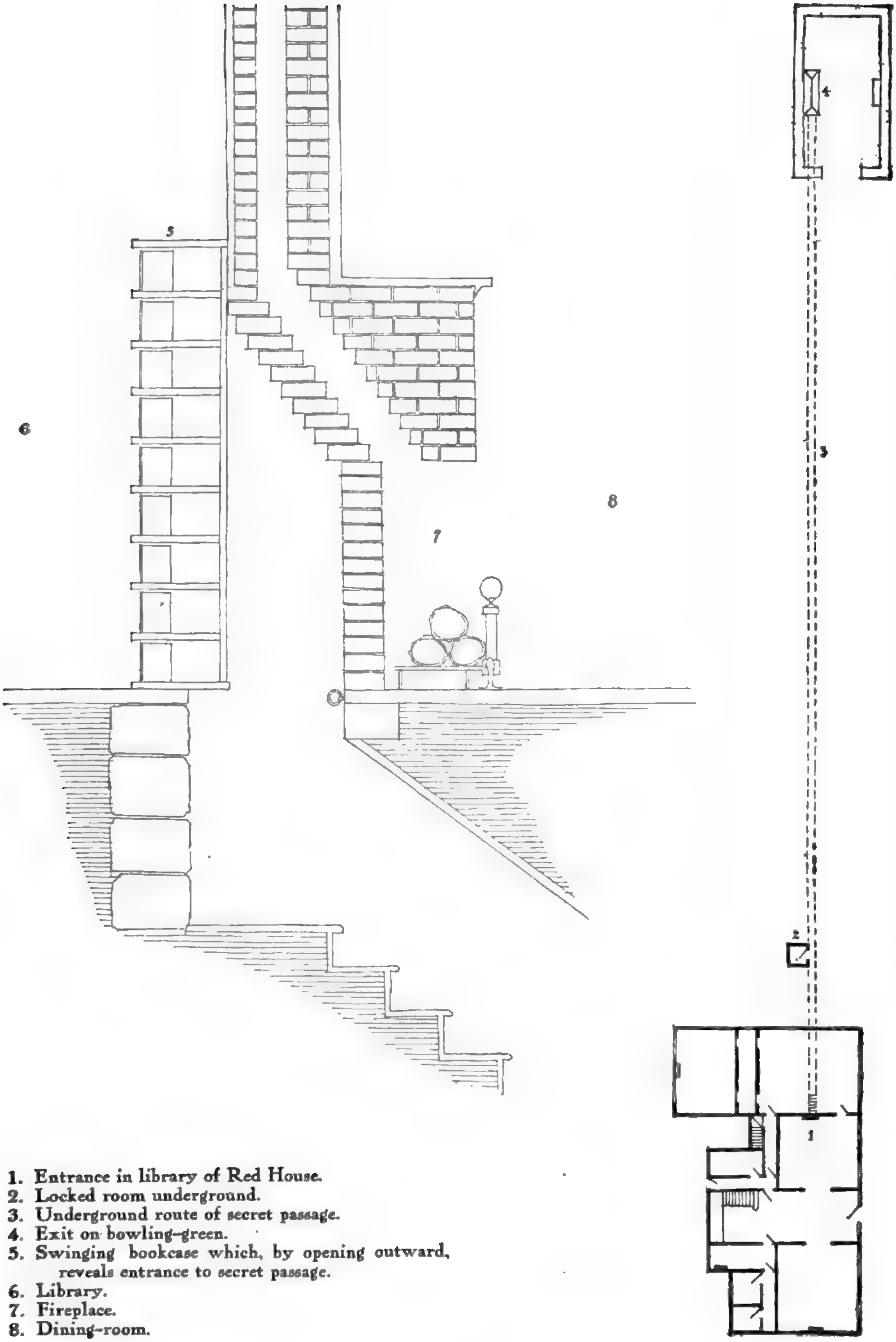
"That's just what I told Mr. Cayley, when he showed me the pond. However, we sha'n't do any harm by looking. It's the unexpected that's the most likely in this sort of case."

"You're quite right, Inspector. Well, we mustn't keep you. Good afternoon," and Antony smiled pleasantly at him.

Antony stood looking after the inspector as he strode off, silent for so long that Bill shook him by the arm at last, and asked him rather crossly what was the matter.

Antony shook his head slowly from side to side.

"I don't know, Bill, really I don't know.



1. Entrance in library of Red House.
2. Locked room underground.
3. Underground route of secret passage.
4. Exit on bowling-green.
5. Swinging bookcase which, by opening outward, reveals entrance to secret passage.
6. Library.
7. Fireplace.
8. Dining-room.

DIAGRAM OF THE ENTRANCE TO THE SECRET PASSAGE.

It's too devilish what I keep thinking. He can't be as cold-blooded as that."

"Who?"

Without answering, Antony led the way back to the garden-seat on which they had been sitting. He sat there with his head in his hands.

"Oh, I hope they find something," he murmured; "oh, I hope they do."

"In the pond?"

"Yes."

"But what?"

"Anything, Bill; anything."

Bill was annoyed.

"I say, Tony, this won't do. You really mustn't be so damn mysterious. What's happened to you suddenly?"

Antony looked up at him in surprise.

"Didn't you hear what he said?"

"What, particularly?"

"That it was Cayley's idea to drag the pond."

"Oh!" Bill was rather excited again. "You mean that he's hidden something there? Some false clue which he wants the police to find?"

"I hope so," said Antony earnestly, "but I'm afraid—" He stopped short.

"Afraid of what?"

"Afraid that he hasn't hidden anything there. Afraid that——"

"Well?"

"What's the safest place in which to hide anything very important?"

"Somewhere where nobody will look."

"There's a better place than that."

"What?"

"Somewhere where everybody has already looked."

"By Jove! You mean that as soon as the pond *has* been dragged, Cayley will hide something there?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so."

"But why afraid?"

"Because I think that it must be something very important, something which couldn't easily be hidden anywhere else."

"What?" asked Bill eagerly.

Antony shook his head.

"No, I'm not going to talk about it yet. We can wait and see what the inspector finds. He may find something—I don't know what—something that Cayley has put there for him to find. But if he doesn't, then it will be because Cayley is going to hide something there to-night."

"What?" asked Bill again.

"You will see what, Bill," said Antony; "because we shall be there."

"Are we going to watch him?"

"Yes, if the inspector finds nothing."

"That's good," said Bill.

Antony looked at his watch and stood up.

"Come along," he said. "It's time for that job I spoke about."

"The passage?" said Bill eagerly.

"No; the thing which I said that I had to do this afternoon."

"Oh, of course. What is it?"

Without saying anything, Antony led the way indoors to the office.

IT WAS three o'clock, and at three o'clock yesterday Antony and Cayley had found the body. At a few minutes after three he had been looking out of the window of the adjoining room, and had been surprised suddenly to find the door open and Cayley behind him. He had vaguely wondered at the time why he had expected the door to be shut, but he had had no time then to worry the thing out, and he had promised himself to look into it at his leisure afterward. Possibly it meant nothing; possibly, if it meant anything, he could have found out its meaning by a visit to the office that morning. But he had felt that he would be more likely to recapture the impressions of yesterday if he chose as far as possible the same conditions for his experiment. So he had decided that three o'clock that afternoon should find him once more in the office.

As he went into the room, followed by Bill, he felt it almost as a shock that there was now no body of Robert lying there between the two doors. But there was a dark stain which showed where the dead man's head had been, and Antony knelt down over it, as he had knelt twenty-four hours before.

"I want to go through it again," he said. "You must be Cayley. Cayley said he would get some water. I remember thinking that water wasn't much good to a dead man, and that probably he was only too glad to do anything, rather than nothing. He came back with a wet sponge and a handkerchief. I suppose he got the handkerchief from the chest of drawers. Wait a bit."

He got up and went into the adjoining

room; looked round it, pulled open a drawer or two and, after shutting all the doors, came back to the office.

"The sponge is there, and there are handkerchiefs in the top right-hand drawer. Now then, Bill, just pretend you're Cayley. You've just said something about water, and you get up."

Feeling that it was all a little uncanny, Bill, who had been kneeling beside his friend, got up and walked out. Antony, as he had done on the previous day, looked up after him as he went. Bill turned into the room on the right, opened the drawer and got the handkerchief, damped the sponge and came back.

"Well?" he said wonderingly.

Antony shook his head.

"It's all different," he said. "For one thing, you made a devil of a noise and Cayley didn't."

"Perhaps you weren't listening when Cayley went in."

"I wasn't. But I should have heard him if I could have heard him, and I should have remembered afterward."

"Perhaps Cayley shut the door after him."

"Wait!"

He pressed his hand over his eyes and thought. It wasn't anything which he had heard, but something which he had seen. He tried desperately hard to see it again. He saw Cayley getting up, opening the door from the office, leaving it open and walking into the passage, turning to the door on the right, opening it, going in, and then— What did his eyes see after that? If they would only tell him again!

Suddenly he jumped up, his face alight. "Bill, I've got it!" he cried.

"What?"

"The shadow on the wall! I was looking at the shadow on the wall. Oh, ass, and ten times ass!"

Bill looked uncomprehendingly at him. Antony took his arm and pointed to the wall of the passage.

"Look at the sunlight on it," he said. "That's because you've left the door of that room open. The sun comes straight in through the windows. Now, I'm going to shut the door. Look! D'you see how the shadow moves across? That's what I saw—the shadow moving across as the door shut behind him. Bill, go in and shut the door behind you—quite naturally. Quick!"

Bill went out and Antony knelt, watching eagerly.

"I thought so," he cried. "I knew it couldn't have been that."

"What happened?" said Bill, coming back.

"Just what you would expect. The sunlight came, and the shadow moved back again—all in one movement."

"And what happened yesterday?"

"The sunlight stayed there; and then the shadow came very slowly back, and there was no noise of the door being shut."

Bill looked at him with startled eyes.

"By George! You mean that Cayley closed the door afterward — as an afterthought—and very quietly, so that you couldn't hear?"

Antony nodded.

"Yes. That explains why I was surprised afterward when I went into the room to find the door open behind me. You know how those doors with springs on them close?'

"The sort which old gentlemen have to keep out drafts?"

"Yes. Just at first they hardly move at all, and then very, very slowly they swing to—well, that was the way the shadow moved, and subconsciously I must have associated it with the movement of that sort of door." He got up and dusted his knees. "Now, Bill, just to make sure, go in and close the door like that. As an after thought, you know; and very quietly, so that I don't hear the click of it."

Bill did as he was told, and then put his head out eagerly to hear what had happended.

"That was it," said Antony, with absolute conviction. "That was just what I saw yesterday." He came out of the office and joined Bill in the little room.

"And now," he said, "let's try and find out what it was that Mr. Cayley was doing in here, and why he had to be so very careful that his friend, Mr. Gillingham, didn't overhear him."

ANTONY'S first thought was that Cayley had hidden something; something, perhaps, which he had found by the body, and—but that was absurd. In the time at his disposal he could have done no more than put it away in a drawer, where it would be much more open to discovery by Antony than if he had kept it in his pocket. In any case he would have removed it by this time and hidden it in some more secret place. Besides, why in this case bother about shutting the door?

Bill pulled open a drawer in the chest and looked inside.

"Is it any good going through these, do you think?" he asked.

Antony looked over his shoulder.

"Why did he keep clothes here at all?" he asked. "Did he ever change down here?"

"My dear Tony, he had more clothes than anybody in the world. He just kept them here in case they might be useful, I expect. When you and I go from London to the country, we carry our clothes about with us. Mark never did. In his flat in London he had everything all over again which he has here. It was a hobby with him, collecting clothes. If he'd had half a dozen houses, they would all have been full of a complete gentleman's town and country outfit."

"I see."

"Of course it might be useful sometimes, when he was busy in the next room, not to have to go up-stairs for a handkerchief or a more comfortable coat."

"I see. Yes." He was walking round the room as he answered, and he lifted the top of the linen-basket which stood near the wash-basin and glanced in. "He seems to have come in here for a collar lately."

BILL peered in. There was one collar at the bottom of the basket.

"Yes. I daresay he would," he agreed. "If he suddenly found that the one he was wearing was uncomfortable or a little bit dirty, or something. He was very finicky."

Antony leaned over and picked it out.

"It must have been uncomfortable this time," he said, after examining it carefully. "It couldn't very well be cleaner." He dropped it back again. "Any way, he did come in here sometimes?"

"Oh, yes."

"Yes, but what did Cayley come in for so secretly?"

"What did he want to shut the door for?" said Bill. "That's what I don't understand. You couldn't have seen him, anyhow."

"No. So it follows that I might have heard him. He was going to do something which he didn't want me to hear."

"By George, that's it!" said Bill eagerly.

"Yes; but what?"

Bill frowned hopefully to himself, but no inspiration came.

"Well, let's have some air, anyway," he said at last, exhausted by the effort, and he went to the window, opened it, and looked out. Then, struck by an idea, he turned back to Antony and said: "Do you think I had better go up to the pond to make sure that they're still at it? Because—" He broke off suddenly at the sight of Antony's face.

"Oh, idiot, idiot!" Antony cried. "Oh, you lamb, you blessing! Oh, Gillingham, you incomparable ass!"

"What on earth——"

"The window, the window!" cried Antony, pointing to it.

Bill turned back to the window, expecting it to say something. As it said nothing, he looked at Antony again.

"He was opening the window!" cried Antony.

"Who?"

"Cayley, of course." Very gravely and slowly he expounded. "He came in here in order to open the window. He shut the door so that I shouldn't hear him open the window. He opened the window. I came in here and found the window open. I said, 'This window is open. My amazing powers of analysis tell me that the murderer must have escaped by this open window.' 'Oh,' said Cayley, raising his eyebrows. 'Well,' said he, 'I suppose you must be right.' Said I proudly, 'I am. For the window is open,' I said. Oh, incomparable ass!"

He understood now. It explained so much that had been puzzling him.

He tried to put himself in Cayley's place—Cayley, when Antony had first discovered him, hammering at the door and crying, "Let me in!" Whatever had happened inside the office, whoever had killed Robert, Cayley knew all about it, and knew that Mark was not inside, and had not escaped by the window. But it was necessary to Cayley's plans—to Mark's plans if they were acting in concert—that he should be thought so to have escaped. At some time, then, while he was hammering (the key in his pocket) at the locked door, he must suddenly have remembered—with what a shock—that a mistake had been made. A window had not been left open!

Probably it would just have been a horrible doubt at first. *Was* the office window open? Surely it was open! *Was* it? Would he have time now to unlock the door, slip in, open the French windows and slip out again? No. At any moment the servants might come. It was too risky. Fatal, if he were discovered. But servants were stupid. He could get the windows safely open while they were crowding round the body. They wouldn't notice. He could do it somehow.

And then Antony's sudden appearance! Here was a complication. And Antony suggesting that they should try the window! Why, the window was just what he wanted to avoid. No wonder he had seemed dazed at first.

Ah, and here at last was the explanation why they had gone the longest way round—and yet *run*. It was Cayley's only chance of getting a start on Antony, of getting to the windows first, of working them open somehow before Antony caught him up. Even if that were impossible, he must get there first, just to make sure. Perhaps they *were* open. He must get away from Antony and see. And if they were shut, hopelessly shut, then he must have a moment to himself, a moment in which to think of some other plan and avoid the ruin which seemed so suddenly to be threatening.

So he had run. But Antony had kept up with him. They had broken in the window together and gone into the office. But Cayley was not done yet. There was the dressing-room window! But quietly, quietly. Antony mustn't hear.

And Antony didn't hear. Indeed, he had played up to Cayley splendidly. Not only had he called attention to the open window, but he had carefully explained to Cayley why Mark had chosen this particular window in preference to the office window. And Cayley had solemnly agreed that probably that was the reason. How he must have chuckled to himself! But he was still a little afraid. Afraid that Antony would examine the shrubbery. Why? Obviously because there was no trace of any one having broken through the shrubbery. No doubt Cayley had provided the necessary traces since and had helped the inspector to find them. Had he even gone as far as footmarks—in Mark's shoes? But the ground was very hard. Perhaps footmarks were not necessary. Antony smiled as he thought of the big Cayley trying to squeeze into the dapper little Mark's shoes. Cayley must have been glad that footmarks were not necessary.

No, the open window was enough; the open window and a broken twig or two. But quietly, quietly. Antony mustn't hear. And Antony had not heard. But he had seen a shadow on the wall.

THEY were outside on the lawn again now, Bill and Antony, and Bill was listening open-mouthed to his friend's theory of yesterday's happenings. It fitted in, it explained things, but it did not get them any further. It only gave them another mystery to solve.

"What's that?" said Anthony.

"Mark. Where's Mark? If he never went into the office at all, then where is he now?"

"I don't say that he never went into the office. In fact, he must have. Elsie heard him." He stopped and repeated slowly to himself: "She heard him—at least she says she did. But if he was there, he came out again by the door."

"Well, but where does that lead you?"

"Where it led Mark. The passage."

"Do you mean that he's been hiding there all the time?"

Antony was silent until Bill had repeated his question and then, with an effort, he came out of his thoughts and answered him.

"I don't know. But look here. Here is a possible explanation. I don't know if it is the right one—I don't know, Bill; I'm rather frightened. Frightened of what may have happened, of what may be going to happen. However, here is an explanation. See if you can find any fault with it."

With his legs stretched out and his hands deep in his pockets, he lay back on the garden seat, looking up to the blue summer sky above him, and just as if he saw up there the events of yesterday being enacted over again, he described them slowly to Bill as they happened.

Bill was past the secret door now, but still tapping. *Umpt-y*-iddy, *umpt-y*-iddy. Would Antony understand? "C for Cayley. Wait. Cayley's here." "Oh, for God's sake sit down!" burst out Cayley.

"We'll begin at the moment when Mark shoots Robert. Call it an accident; probably it was. Mark would say it was, anyhow. He is in a panic, naturally. But he doesn't lock the door and run away. For one thing, the key is on the outside of the door; for another, he is not quite such a fool as that. But he is in a horrible position. He is known to be on bad terms with his brother; he has just uttered some foolish threat to him, which may possibly have been overheard. What is he to do? He does the natural thing, the thing which Mark would always do in such circumstances. He consults Cayley, the invaluable, inevitable Cayley.

"Cayley is just outside, Cayley must have heard the shot, Cayley will tell him what to do. He opens the door just as Cayley is coming to see what is the matter. He explains rapidly. 'What's to be done, Cay? What's to be done? It was an accident. I swear it was an accident. He threatened me. He would have shot me if I hadn't. Think of something, quick!'

"Cayley had thought of something. 'Leave it to me,' he says. 'You clear out altogether. *I* shot him, if you like. I'll do all the explaining. Get away. Hide. Nobody saw you go in. Into the passage, quick. I'll come to you there as soon as I can.'

"Good Cayley. Faithful Cayley! Mark's courage comes back. Cayley will explain all right. Cayley will tell the servants that it was an accident. He will ring up the police. Nobody will suspect Cayley—Cayley has no quarrel with Robert. And then Cayley will come into the passage and tell him that it is all right, and Mark will go out by the other end and saunter slowly back to the house. He will be told the news by one of the servants. Robert accidentally shot? Good Heavens!

"So, greatly reassured, Mark goes into the library. And Cayley goes to the door of the office and locks it. And then he bangs on the door and shouts 'Let me in!' "

Antony was silent. Bill looked at him and shook his head.

"Yes, Tony, but that doesn't make sense. What's the point of Cayley behaving like that?"

Antony shrugged his shoulders without answering.

"And what had happened to Mark since?"

Antony shrugged his shoulders again.

"Well, the sooner we go into that passage, the better," said Bill.

"You're ready to go?"

"Quite," said Bill surprised.

"You're quite ready for what we may find?"

"You're being dashed mysterious, old boy."

"I know I am." He gave a little laugh and went on: "Perhaps I'm being an ass, just a melodramatic ass. Well, I hope I am." He looked at his watch.

"It's safe, is it? They're still busy at the pond?"

"WE'D better make certain. Could you be a sleuth-hound, Bill—one of those that travel on their stomachs very noiselessly? I mean, could you get near enough to the pond to make sure that Cayley is still there, without letting him see you?"

"Certainly!" He got up eagerly. "You wait."

Antony's head shot up suddenly. "Why, that was what Mark said," he cried.

"Mark?"

"Yes. What Elsie heard him say."

"Oh, that!"

"Yes. I suppose she couldn't have made a mistake, Bill? She did hear him?"

"She couldn't have mistaken his voice, if that's what you mean."

"Oh!"

"Mark had an extraordinarily characteristic voice."

"Oh!" said Antony again, but this time with more interest.

"One would have known it anywhere."

"Indeed?" said Antony, now smiling to himself. "Indeed?"

"Rather high-pitched, you know, and—well, one can't explain, but——"

"Yes?" said Antony eagerly.

"Well, rather like this, you know, or even more so if anything." He rattled these words off in Mark's monotonous, high-pitched voice, and then laughed and added, in his natural voice: "That was really rather good."

Antony nodded quickly. "That was like it?" he said.

"Exactly."

"Yes." He got up and squeezed Bill's arm. "Well, just go and see about Cayley, and then we'll get moving. I shall be in the library."

"Right."

BILL nodded and walked off in the direction of the pond. This was glorious fun; this was life. The immediate program could hardly be bettered. First of all he was going to stalk Cayley. There was a little copse above the level of the pond and about a hundred yards away from it. He would come into this from the back, creep cautiously through it, taking care that no twigs cracked, and then, drawing himself on his stomach to the edge, peer down upon the scene below him.

And then, when he had got back unobserved to the house and reported to Antony, they were going to explore the secret passage! Again, what fun! Unfortunately there seemed to be no chance of buried treasure, but there might be buried clues. Even if you found nothing, you couldn't get away from the fact that a secret passage was a secret passage and anything might happen in it. But even that wasn't the end of this exciting day. They were going to watch the pond that night; they were going to watch Cayley under the moonlight, watch him as he threw into the silence of the pond—what? The revolver? Well, anyhow, they were going to watch him. What fun!

To Antony, who was older and who realized into what deep waters they were getting, it did not seem fun. But it was amazingly interesting. He saw so much, and yet somehow it was all out of focus. It was like looking at an opal and discovering with every movement of it some new color, some new gleam of light reflected, and yet never really seeing the opal as a whole. He was too near to it, or too far away; he strained his eyes and he relaxed his eyes; it was no good. His brain could not get hold of it.

But there were moments when he almost had it and then turned away from it. He had seen more of life than Bill, but he had never seen murder before, and this which was on his mind now, and to which he was afraid to listen, was not just the hot-blooded killing which any man may come to if he lose control. It was something much more horrible. Too horrible to be true. Then let him look again for the truth. He looked again, but it was all out of focus.

"I will *not* look again," he said aloud, as he began to walk toward the house. "Not yet, anyway." He would go on collecting facts and impressions. Perhaps the one fact would come along by itself which would make everything clear.

BILL had come back, and had reported, rather breathless, that Cayley was still at the pond.

"But I don't think they're getting up much except mud," he said. "I ran most of the way back so as to give us as much time as possible."

Antony nodded.

"Well, come along, then," he said. "The sooner, the quicker."

They stood in front of the row of sermons. Antony took down the Reverend Theodore Ussher's famous volume, and felt for the spring. Bill pulled. The shelves swung open toward them.

"By George!" said Bill, "it *is* a narrow way."

There was an opening about a yard square in front of them, which had something the look of a brick fireplace, a fireplace raised about two feet from the ground. But save for one row of bricks in front the floor of it was emptiness. Antony took a torch from his pocket and flashed it down into the blackness.

"Look!" he whispered to the eager Bill. "The steps begin down there. Six feet down."

He flashed his torch up again. There was a hand-hold of iron, a sort of large iron staple, in the bricks in front of them.

"You swing off from there," said Bill. "At least, I suppose you do. I wonder how Ruth Norris liked doing it."

"Cayley helped her, I should think. It's funny."

"Shall I go first?" asked Bill, obviously longing to do so.

Antony shook his head with a smile.

"I think I will, if you don't mind very much, Bill. Just in case."

"In case of what?"

"Well—in case."

Bill had to be content with that, but he was too much excited to wonder what Antony meant.

"All right!" he said. "Go on."

"Well, we'll just make sure we can get back again first. It really wouldn't be fair on the inspector if we got stuck down here for the rest of our lives. He's got enough to do trying to find Mark, but if he has to find you and me as well——"

"We can always get out at the other end."

"Well, we're not certain yet. I think I'd better just go down and back. I promise faithfully not to explore."

Antony sat down on the ledge of bricks, swung his feet over, and sat there for a moment, his legs dangling. He flashed his torch into the darkness again, so as to make sure where the steps began; then returned it to his pocket, seized the staple in front of him and swung himself down. His feet touched the steps beneath him, and he let go.

"Is it all right?" said Bill anxiously.

"All right. I'll just go down to the bottom of the steps and back. Stay there."

The light shone down by his feet. His head began to disappear. For a little while Bill, craning down the opening, could still see faint splashes of light, and could hear slow, uncertain footsteps; for a little longer he could fancy that he saw and heard them; then he was alone.

Well, not quite alone. There was a sudden voice in the hall outside.

"Good Lord!" said Bill, turning round with a start. "Cayley!"

IF HE was not so quick in thought as Antony, he was quick enough in action. Thought was not demanded now. To close the secret door safely but noiselessly, to make sure that the books were in the right places, to move away to another row of shelves so as to be discovered deep in Badminton or Baedeker, or whomever the kind gods should send to his aid—the difficulty was not to decide what to do, but to do all this in five seconds rather than in six.

"Ah, there you are!" said Cayley from the doorway.

"Hallo!" said Bill in surprise, looking up from the fourth volume of "The Life and Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge." "Have they finished?"

"Finished what?"

"The pond," said Bill, wondering why he was reading Coleridge on such a fine afternoon. Desperately he tried to think of a good reason—verifying a quotation—an argument with Antony—that would do. But *what* quotation?

"Oh, no. They're still at it. Where's Gillingham?"

"The Ancient Mariner"—water, water, everywhere—or was that something else? And where was Gillingham? Water, water, everywhere——

"Tony? Oh, he's about somewhere. We're just going down to the village. They aren't finding anything at the pond, are they?"

"No. But they like doing it. Something off their minds when they can say they've done it."

Bill, deep in his book, looked up and said "Yes" without much interest, and went back to it again. He was just getting to the place.

"What's the book?" said Cayley, coming up to him. Out of the corner of his eye he glanced at the shelf of sermons as he came. Bill saw that glance and wondered. Was there anything there to give away the secret?

"I was just looking up a quotation," he drawled. "Tony and I had a bet about it. You know that thing about—er—water, water everywhere, and—er—not a drop to drink?" (But what on earth, he wondered to himself, were they betting about?)

" '*Nor any* drop to drink,' to be accurate."

Bill looked at him in surprise. Then a happy smile came on his face.

"Quite sure?" he said.

"Of course."

"Then you've saved me a lot of trouble. That's what the bet was about." He closed the book with a slam, put it back in its shelf, and began to feel for his pipe and tobacco. "I was a fool to bet with Tony," he added. "He always knows that sort of thing."

So far, so good. But here was Cayley still in the library, and there was Antony still in the passage. When Antony came back, he would expect to find the door closed, because the whole object of his going had been to see if he could open the door easily from the inside. At any moment, then, the book-shelf might swing back and show Antony's head in the gap. A nice surprise for Cayley!

"Come with us?" he said casually, as he struck a match. He pulled vigorously at the flame as he waited for the answer, hoping to hide his anxiety, for if Cayley assented, he was done.

Everybody's Magazine, October, 1921

"I've got to go into Stanton."

Bill blew out a great cloud of smoke with an expiration which covered also a heartfelt sigh of relief.

"Oh, a pity. You're driving, I suppose?"

"Yes. The car will be here directly. There's a letter I must write first." He sat down at a writing-table and took out a sheet of note-paper.

He was facing the secret door; if it opened he would see it. At any moment now it might open.

BILL dropped into a chair and thought. Antony must be warned. Obviously. But how? How did one signal to anybody? By code. Morse code. Did Antony know it? Did Bill know it himself, if it came to that? He had picked up a bit in the army—not enough to send a message, of course. But a message was impossible, anyhow; Cayley would hear him tapping it out. It wouldn't do to send more than a single letter. What letters did he know? And what letter would convey anything to Antony? He pulled at his pipe, his eyes wandering from Cayley at his desk to the Reverend Theodore Ussher in his shelf. What letter?

C for Cayley. Would Antony understand? Probably not, but it was just worth trying. What was C? Long, short, long, short. Umpty-iddy-umpty-iddy. Was that right? C—yes, that was C. He was sure of that. C. Umpty-iddy-umpty-iddy.

Hands in pockets, he got up and wandered across the room, humming vaguely to himself, the picture of a man waiting for another man (as it might be his friend, Gillingham) to come in and take him away for a walk or something. He wandered across to the books at the back of Cayley and began to tap absent-mindedly on the shelves as he looked at the titles. Umpty-iddy-umpty-iddy. Not that it was much like that at first; he couldn't quite get the rhythm of it.

Umpty-y-iddy, *umpt*-y-iddy. That was better. He was back at Samuel Taylor Coleridge now. Antony would begin to hear him soon. *Umpt*-y-iddy, *umpt*-y-iddy; just the aimless tapping of a man who is wondering what book he will take out with him to read on the lawn. Would Antony hear? One always heard the man in the next flat knocking out his pipe. Would Antony understand? *Umpt*-y-iddy, *umpt*-y-iddy. "C for Cayley, Antony. Cayley's here. For God's sake, wait."

"Good lord! Sermons!" said Bill, with a loud laugh. *Umpt*-y-iddy, *umpt*-y-iddy. "Ever read 'em, Cayley?"

"What?" Cayley looked up suddenly. Bill's back moved slowly along, his fingers beating a tattoo on the shelves as he walked.

"Er—no," said Cayley, with a little laugh. An awkward, uncomfortable little laugh, it seemed to Bill.

"Nor do I." He was past the sermons now—past the secret door—but still tapping in the same aimless way.

"Oh, for God's sake, sit down!" burst out Cayley. "Or go outside if you want to walk about."

Bill turned round in astonishment.

"Hallo, what's the matter?"

Cayley was slightly ashamed of his outburst.

"Sorry, Bill," he apologized. "My nerves are on edge. Your constant tapping and fidgeting about——"

"Tapping?" said Bill with an air of complete surprise.

"Tapping on the shelves, and humming. Sorry. It got on my nerves."

"My dear old chap, I'm awfully sorry. I'll go out in the hall."

"It's all right," said Cayley, and went on with his letter.

Bill sat down in his chair again. Had Antony understood? Well, anyhow, there was nothing to do now but wait for Cayley to go. "And if you ask *me*," said Bill to himself, much pleased, "I ought to be on the stage. That's where I ought to be. The complete actor."

A minute, two minutes, three minutes—five minutes. It was safe now. Antony had guessed.

"Is the car there?" asked Cayley, as he sealed up his letter.

Bill strolled into the hall, called back, "Yes," and went out to talk to the chauffeur. Cayley joined him, and they stood there for a moment.

"Hallo!" said a pleasant voice behind them. They turned round and saw Antony.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Bill."

What was it that Cayley proposed to hide in the pond that night? "The Red House Murder" will be continued in the November number, out October 15.

The Fatted Prodigal

John Got the Girl, but She Cost Him a Cool Ten Million, According to the Angry Father, who Tried Playing with a Buzz-Saw and—but Read What Happened to Father

By Mabel Dunham Thayer and Stewart Wells

Illustrated by R. K. Ryland

"OF COURSE she's brainless," snapped old Peter Stickney, glaring out of the club window. "She's marrying John."

"I'll admit that's evidence," agreed Carlysle Henderson, flicking his cigar ash, "but not conclusive. Of course he's your son——"

"What do you mean, my son?" growled old Peter.

"Isn't he?" Carlysle returned mildly surprised.

"Of course he is. Of course he is."

Peter's fist came down hard upon the tabouret. "Stop twisting my words!"

Carlysle grinned mischievously, making deeper the crinkles on his fine old weather-beaten face.

"She's a chorus girl," went on Peter acridly. "That's why she's brainless.' '

"Have you been meeting many chorus girls lately?" hazarded his tormentor, a bit ruefully.

"Of course not."

Peter thought it well just at this point to turn and study his friend's attitude. There was something about it——

"I was only thinking that perhaps you were right. I couldn't imagine a regular chorus girl marrying John."

"I don't see why not," Peter returned with a good deal of asperity. "With my money——"

"That's just it. It's your money. And even show girls know that rich men's sons are not good catches. Why, hang it, man, she must be in love with him."

The idea seemed a good deal of a surprise. "If she is, she'll have to get over it," said Peter grimly. "I'm going to see her and when I'm through there'll be mighty little romance left."

"Romance," breathed Carlysle. "I had almost forgotten that. It might be the saving grace."

"Rot!" Peter snorted. "Happiness in marriage is a matter of view-point. And view-point is a matter of bringing up. The thousand-and-one little happenings that no man can lay a finger on. The thousand-and-one decisions upon extremely minor matters which require the same conventions, the same habit of thought to agree upon. Those are the damn fool things that make marriage a success or failure. Not romance, nor passion, nor finances."

"Nevertheless she may have the same traditions, who knows?"

Peter flushed.

"You mistake me, my friend," Henderson said quietly. "You have built a tremendous business because you have vision, perhaps she——"

"Not a chance; her family is hopelessly stupid."

"But," pursued Carlysle helpfully. "Her mother may have been romantic, or her grandmother. What I am trying to say is that many a stupid romantic woman is able to introduce an unexpected cleverness into the family circle."

"What you are trying to say is disgusting."

"It often happens," asserted Henderson mildly. "There was Nell Gwynne the founder of a famous family and——"

"Are you offering that as an inducement for a daughter-in-law?" thundered old Peter. "I'll have you understand that the women of my family are virtuous."

"How uninteresting," sighed Carlysle. "However, Peter, as regards marriage, you are partly right. A stupid woman with one's own view-point is more apt to stand up under the daily wear of marriage better than a more fascinating woman whose ideas and customs are too diverse."

Peter grunted.

"There was Grace Breton, you remember Grace, fascinating, my word! How that woman could charm! But she did lead John a devil of a life. He couldn't keep a friend. Their wives simply wouldn't stand for her. She never had a closed season for flirting. John was always just leaving for somewhere to get her away from somebody. And she would varnish her finger nails. John detested that. And wear bangles all over her, jingly things that clinked when she walked, made John feel conspicuous and guilty, as if he were out with his mistress at the wrong places."

"I'm glad you see my point," said old Peter dryly. "Now, maybe you'll be good enough to go and see my son for me and make him understand reason, while I interview his lady friend."

A man brought in a telegram for Peter. He became almost apoplectic while reading it.

"THEY'VE done it, the young fools," he spluttered. "I'll tell them a thing or two. Bring me my hat and coat. Come along, Henderson. You're my attorney. We're going to have this thing out now once and for all."

"Aren't you rushing things a bit?" asked Carlysle mildly. "Wouldn't you be—er—more at home in your office—more at an advantage?"

"To-morrow they start for the West unless I stop them." Peter was struggling into his great coat. He was a big unwieldy man.

Carlysle shrugged his shoulders.

"If that's the case—" he said, dismissing the objection and slipping quickly into the coat the man held for him. Peter watched his ease of motion, grudgingly, admiringly. He was thinking to himself that it took three generations to make a gentleman, after all. And that now his chance for John's children was ruined. He hated the girl worse than ever.

He liked it no better when he had settled himself in the deep armchair of John's living-room at the Ritz. His father had been a steel-worker. He himself had begun life in the shadow of the big mills. And now his grandchildren would be as coarse and common as himself. All his wealth could not buy fineness. All John's education had failed to inculcate good taste. They were cheap. That's what they were. Cheap! A lot of laborers sitting in plush chairs. A thousand a year could buy them all that they could wholesomely enjoy. Great art, wondrous music, literature, the fine things of life which took money to enjoy would mean nothing to them. Wealth would mean only more vulgar display. Richer foods to eat. More diamonds to hang around coarse-fleshed necks. Less work, less intellect. More grossness. His thoughts traveled on and on. He had wanted to make his wealth count for better things—better as he saw them.

And then she came into the room. The girl who had spoiled it all!

Her eyes were big and wondering like a little child's and she spoke in a slightly husky voice as if she were a bit breathless from excitement or eagerness to please.

"I'm so sorry John isn't here," she said, giving him a timid hand which unconsciously he reached out and took. He had not meant to. It annoyed him that he had apparently established friendly relations with this young person.

"This is Henderson, my attorney," growled old Peter, trying to undo any damage he had done.

"I am glad to meet Mr. Henderson." She bowed prettily, looking at him curiously from serious brown eyes.

There was a bad pause. Peter cleared his throat twice.

"Of course you know John won't get one cent of my money," he said suddenly and with great force.

"That will be hard for John," she said softly.

"Hmph!" Peter snorted. "He should have thought of that."

"He did."

She had crossed the room and drawn herself up into the corner of the large divan. Both slim arms were around her drawn-up knees, her fingers interlocked gracefully.

"He did," she repeated thoughtfully "But I am afraid that it will be a lot harder than he realizes."

"And how about you?" asked old Peter dryly.

"Oh, I am used to scheming to get along."

"I see you're used to scheming," agreed Peter unkindly.

Cecily turned and looked at him. She seemed troubled but unhurt by his retort.

It made Peter want to beat her into consciousness some way.

"You've schemed John out of ten million dollars," he said brutally. As a matter of fact he had to be brutal or weaken.

There was another awkward pause. Peter found himself shuffling his feet. Why did she not say something?

"I'm absolutely through with him," he prodded.

"Is it necessary to go that far?" she asked quickly. "You see, he sort of expected you wouldn't want to give him any more money, or I did; but he thinks a heap of you. You've been father and mother both, you know."

Peter did not look at her.

"In fact I'd rather you wouldn't help him financially. He's an awful baby about life and business and things. You've spoiled him so. Not that you've meant to," she added, hastily apologetic. "Still, I do wish you could be friends." She stopped and leaned forward to look earnestly into his face.

"Say, what kind of a game——"

Henderson cut in quickly.

"We are to understand, Mrs. Stickney," Old Peter winced at the name. "We are to understand," repeated Henderson, "that you do not wish John to take any more money from his parent?"

"It will be hard for John," Cecily evaded. "But as long as his father feels the way that he does, I thought it might not hurt John as much as one might think. My father always said that there was only one thing that made life worth living and that was being needed by some one. Nobody ever really needed John until I came."

"How about me?" demanded Peter. "Don't I need him?"

"Perhaps," said Cecily.

"Perhaps," spluttered Peter.

"But I need him. And he needs me very much."

"So you need him?" asked Peter gruffly. "And it's worth his paying ten million dollars for?"

"It's an awfully big price," wistfully. "If it was all for me, it wouldn't be worth it at all. But to find out what is in him might be worth even that," she shot at him defiantly.

"You're a pretty clever girl," snapped Peter.

"Please! Please!" she put up her hand protestingly. "I'm not clever at all. I'm stupid. Very stupid, indeed. That's why I need John so badly. He loves me and I could never get along without some one who cared for me, I'm so little and useless."

"Your littleness and uselessness is costing John his family, his money and his whole position in society," blurted Peter. "You'll have the pleasure of seeing your John tied to the grind all his life. Do you understand? You'll see him working and slaving for a mere pittance because you are little and useless. He hasn't the brains to make a decent living."

"Are you sure of that?" she asked meekly. And then, "Of course you're his father, but——"

"You are being silly." Peter was ruffled. "We might just as well come to terms. You give John up at once and I'll see that your littleness and uselessness is taken better care of than it deserves. Give him up without any fuss or scandal. A quiet divorce and a big enough settlement from me to keep you dolled up and idle all the rest of your life."

Cecily did not act as if she were listening. In fact it was some moments before she answered. Peter even thought of repeating the important part of his remarks.

"If I thought it would be best for John, Mr. Stickney," she said in her throaty childish voice, "I could not refuse to give him up. But had I wanted his money I would not have married him. It wasn't really necessary. I could have had an armful and been free to do as I liked. Without doing any wrong, either. John is a pretty sweet boy, you know, and you've never denied him any money for—for—escapades——"

JOHN came in just at this point. His brow was dark with anger when he had sized up the situation. His father and his attorney meant just one conclusion to John's sophisticated eye.

"What do they want, honey?" sharply.

"You, dear."

"You have schemed John out of ten million dollars," he

"Your father thinks your marriage unsuitable and he suggests that Mrs. Stickney release you at a price satisfactory to herself," Henderson put in mildly.

"And for what reason?" John asked his father, trying to keep dramatics out of the situation.

"Because she's entirely unsuited to you."

"In what way?" He hoped his father would not make him lose control of himself.

"I think, in a way, your father is right," said Cecily, looking like a wise little bird. "You couldn't get along without money, dear, and he is going to cut you off without a cent."

"All right then." John thrust his chin forward a trifle. "I couldn't get along without money. Neither could you."

Peter heaved a sigh of relief.

"Then that's settled."

"You bet it's settled. We're going to have all the money we need. We're going to roll in it if we want to."

"I'll fix up the separation and settlement papers at once," cut in Henderson, trying to shift John's sentiment solidly for his father.

"You go to hell," said John blandly, and gathered up the coats and hats of his visitors and handed them to Henderson in a bunch.

"But John," stammered Peter incoherently, "you've got to give up this girl. I'm through. I— You've— You can't live without——"

"Oh, I can't?" he asked, opening the door with unmistakable emphasis. "You bet I can't live without Cecily."

"But money—friends——"

"Oh, cut out the funny stuff," said John shortly. "I'm not the only man who ever worked for a living."

He shut the door and without in the least meaning to be, his father was outside.

"Oh, John," Cecily cried. "Are you sure I'm worth risking everything for?"

He crossed the room and picked her up easily into his big arms.

"Hell!" he said inelegantly. "Have we got to start that all over again?"

NOTHING could have looked more expensive than Cecily perched upon the arm of a big tapestried chair kicking thoughtfully at the Sarouk upon which it rested. This consciousness pleased John quite as much as it awed him. It gratified his vanity that this wholly ornamental bit of femininity belonged to him. But his interview downstairs had been disquieting, financially, and he was not sure that he could afford it.

For three months they had lived on at the Ritz while John began his career in that indefinite region known as the "street."

But to-night the management had politely, oh, very politely indeed, but none the less firmly suggested that John pay his bill. There it was in all its crudeness. John Stickney, only son of Peter, had been asked

said brutally. "I am absolutely through with him."

for money straight out for the first time in his life. And he did not have it.

He scowled at Cecily before he remembered.

"You've been talking to that horrid manager," she accused.

He started guiltily.

"Has he been saying anything to you?" he demanded, wishing for a few insults to avenge.

"OF COURSE he hasn't, silly," she said, stroking his hair when he had dropped into the chair beside her.

"But I don't like him. I don't like hotels anyway. I don't like not doing anything all day long. I want to be poor and live in a little apartment somewhere and cook and burn my fingers and have you kiss them and have young folks come in and make rabbits and things and——".

"Is that all?" laughed John shortly. "You want to be poor and—" he was thinking, with a sinking feeling in his insides, that she was getting her wish—"and work hard and have red hands and no clothes."

"What a silly old fuss you are!" she said, kissing him all over his disgruntled face. "Poor people wear lots of clothes and keeping house isn't work. It's fun. I never had a home in all my life and I want one like everything."

It looked for a minute as if she were going to cry so he had to straighten that out and when it was all fixed up he found they had a home anyway.

Nell Torrence, one of the girls in Cecily's old company, had gone on tour with the show and had left the keys to her apartment with Cecily. And it was not much of an apartment, only awfully cute and frilly, cretonnes and everything, and all Cecily had done was to give Nell an old fur coat that she was tired of. And there you were and she was glad John was not mad about it.

John not only was not angry, but he made it a point to inform the manager that he would leave the hotel at once and he could send his dashed dashed bill he was so fussy about to his office in the morning.

In fact, in another half-hour they were moved. Cecily had already packed, the significance of which John overlooked in his haste and relief.

The apartment was intriguing enough to make him forget everything else. Cecily discovered a lot of tinned goods and apparently, miraculously the ice-box held fresh butter and cream and things. John trotted around after Cecily while she concocted a Newburg and toasted bread and set a gate-legged table with dainty dishes and made coffee. He, himself, discovered French pastry in the bread box and an asparagus salad which had been left practically prepared on the ice.

It was exciting, like a game of find the peanuts, and because John had been fed with a silver spoon all his life, he did not think it strange.

"I'll say that Nell girl is some sport," he exclaimed rapturously, leaning back in his armchair to watch Cecily pouring coffee.

"She is a jolly good sort," agreed Cecily. "And now," she passed the coffee and settled back to enjoy solid comfort—she was a bit breathless from some cause or other—"now tell me everything you did down-town to-day."

HE SWALLOWED quickly and jerkily quite as if his train of thought had suddenly struck a spread rail.

"Why—er—nothing turned up to-day except a letter from Bob that he would be away another week or so and to keep right on using his office and forwarding his mail. I—er—something——"

"Now, we've got a home," she interrupted eagerly, "I almost wish you had a regular job like other men and carried your lunch—no, I don't think you'd like to carry your lunch, but——"

"What could I do with a job?" he interrupted not too gently. "A few dollars a week and not a chance——"

"But some jobs are awfully interesting," argued Cecily. "And they're—they're gratifying. You know where they are, and you get promoted just as if you were in school when your marks are good. It's awfully jolly."

"But I don't want a job. I want to make a lot of money so I can laugh at dad. Good Heavens, I know twice as much about the world as he does and look what he's made. All you have to do is get an idea and then get some one to put up the money and there you are," he finished lamely.

"But suppose no one wants to put up the money?"

"But dearie they don't put up any money. I've told you before. They get credit for you. Everything is done on credit."

"But don't you ever have to have the money some time?"

"Of course, honey," he tried to be patient. "When you've made it. Dad made his on phonographs. He got the idea from a bird who invented them. Then the banks lent them money. And then they began to make them. It's simple."

"So we don't need money after all?"

"Oh, I wouldn't go so far as to say that," John hastened to tell her. "Money is a convenient thing sometimes."

"Then I'm glad, because I told Ted he could have our car," she said as if now at last the truth was out.

"You told Ted he could have the car." John was aroused. "You told Ted he could have my car."

"But, deary, you gave it to me. You said it was my car now. You know you did, and the garage man was mean and said, 'Did I think they were running their business for fun and youse birds,' that was what he said. 'Youse birds think we can pay our bills on promises same as youse do.' "

John started out of his chair. "I'll break his——"

"Why, John. I told him I didn't blame him a bit. That was just what was the matter. Every one thought you were rich, so no one paid you for ages and ages and we had an awful time getting by ourselves."

John stared at her gloomily.

"So he said he wouldn't attach the car yet and when Ted said he'd give three thousand cash for it——"

"But I paid six——"

"I know, dear, but you can't sell second-hand cars much this year——"

Cecily came around the table and crawled into John's lap.

"And now you can drive the car down-town to-morrow and Ted will drop over and get it and let's not talk business any more because——"

She put up her mouth to be kissed and he did not want to talk business either. But he wondered if the garage man had told the world he was broke and if that was why the hotel had "called" him. Still there was no use arguing about it now.

Heigho! He liked to have her in his arms like that.

But after a while she got up and picked up the dishes and washed them while John sat and smoked and thought deep thoughts of many things.

"Then there is the stock market," he muttered half aloud. "With three thousand dollars—while it's not much——"

Cecily came in from the kitchen. Her hair was loosened into wayward curls about her flushed face.

"I was reading the funniest book to-day," she said, "by a chap named London. His hero was always saying, 'Look out there, you're standing on your foot.' What did it mean, honey? Sounded awfully silly."

John eyed her quizzically, but her somber brown eyes were totally free from guile. Then he flushed.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered with elaborate carelessness. "I never know half what those writer chaps mean."

IT WAS a thoughtful John that steered his car down-town the following morning. More than once through the long wakeful night, he had speculated on the man who was standing on his foot. Funny how Cecily had happened on such an idea. She was such an innocent baby thing. The kind of exotic little person Edith Taliaferro made one believe real. She looked like Edith, too, in a way.

"Hey, there!" Hang those traffic cops. They were always stopping one when one was thinking hard.

"Maybe a job would be a good thing!" Those pedestrians! John swung the car quickly to keep from running down a stubborn elderly gentleman who crossed when he felt like it as befitted a free American.

Nelson ought to give him a job if he asked for it. He'd done a lot for Nelson in his time. If he could only get an idea!

He climbed out of the car, forgetting to lock it, and made his thoughtful way into his office building. Anyway he could play the market. There was Ted's three thousand coming in.

He called up a broker. It was one of his father's brokers, to be exact.

"This is John Stickney." An unexpected prickly feeling seemed to engulf him. "What's Crex steel doing to-day?" John knew what it was doing. It is a private game of solitaire which most men play, this reading of the stock market and figuring what they would have made if——

"Sell me three hundred shares," he snapped in what he hoped was a stern business-like voice.

There was a distinct wait at the other end of the line. This was caused by Carterhorn asking his partner how a Stickney happened to be trading in odd lots.

"Cigaret money," suggested Brown laconically.

"Then it may not mean anything?"

"Not a thing, I'd say. These rich men's sons——"

"But he's selling Crex steel and Crex is going up."

"Let him."

"But, Mr. Stickney." This into the transmitter. "Your——"

"I'm mailing you a check."

This seemed to clear the air at once. As a matter of fact Carterhorn suddenly decided to let the boy go his own way without advice.

John hung up the receiver and went out to an early lunch. When he had finished he strolled over to his parking-place.

The car was gone!

John returned to his office in a semi-daze. He wondered where the money for his check to Carterhorn would come from. Only such a calamity could have sent him forth job-seeking. But here, too, John had a surprise in wait for him. No one to whom he condescended his services had a place for him. There seemed a unanimity of opinion that a man's services must fill a definite need. Furthermore there was a cold directness about the question, "why?" "Why do you think you could fill this position?" "Why do you think we need such a man?" "Why has your experience fitted you for a place in our organization?"

John had a vague idea that there was always plenty of work to be done by high-class, educated men. He had often heard his father say grandiloquently that there was always a place for brains in his organization. When he ventured such an opinion he was informed that the market was glutted with brains. He gained the impression that it was the direction of brains that counted, which would have been a happy idea to work on had John been willing to be guided. But John had yet to be sold off of the belief that knowledge of business was a God-given heritage. A species of trick! He kept on asking to be put to work where he could soon get the run of things whereupon, it was plain to see, he expected practically to direct the business.

At two-thirty he discovered that Crex Steel had dropped four points. This confirmed his belief in his own astuteness and made him more stubborn than ever in his pursuit of the elusive job.

But when, after two hours, three more individuals had scorned his proffered aid with an indifference more belittling than curtness he returned to his useless office slightly squelched.

He had one last idea for immediate needs. He had sold Crex at sixty-seven. At two-thirty it was sixty-three. That gave him a profit on his three hundred shares, of twelve hundred dollars—if he could collect it.

The grand idea was to employ the simple and easy method of borrowing known as "kiting." He would draw a check on a Rochester bank where his name was known and honored, and mail one slightly larger drawn on a New York bank where his account was desired. Then upon the following morning he would invent a sudden trip out of town which would make the closing out of his account with Carterhorn not undignified. Drawing out the entire three thousand covered by his check, plus the twelve hundred profit less broker's expense, would give him a tidy sum to deposit in the said New York bank, and in plenty of time to take care of the Rochester check when it came in several days hence.

He made out both checks and placed them in their respective envelopes with no small air of satisfaction.

It was on his way to get stamps that he met Robson, a former classmate at Yale. And from Robson came disquieting news.

Sam Hill, one of his best buddies, had gone to jail.

Jail! The word had never meant much to John. But coupled with the name of Sam Hill, the jovial, lovable harum-scarum, it sent a wave of nausea across John's tightened throat.

"What on earth did Sam do?" he asked incredulously.

"Oh, he kited some checks and got squeezed before he could cover," Robson answered carelessly.

"I don't get you," John said, but the sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach weakened his knees as a glimmer of intuition made the case personal. The letters in his pocket became suddenly alive. And yet it was not the same. John was sure of covering his checks. He was taking no chance whatever. One had to venture to gain. Nevertheless he decided to take one last look at the market reports before burning his bridges.

The worst had happened. The fine type of the financial column seemed screeching to the world that the market had gone mad. In the last half-hour before closing Crex had shot up five points.

Slowly, and with fingers that trembled slightly, he drew out his letters and deliberately tore them into bits. The air seemed cleared as if he had stepped from the stifling moldy confines of prison into a free world. What had happened to his stock he did not dare to think.

CECILY met him at the door, eager as always for the news of the day.

"Did Ted——" she began breathlessly.

"Don't ever mention Ted Wilson to me again!" he commanded. He could feel the touch of prison walls about to close in on him. And he was disgusted at his folly at not locking a car left to the mercy of New York streets. Never, never did he want to recall this day.

The surprised hurt on her quivering lip would have touched him at any other time. To-night he was fighting battles in himself.

"But the money——"

He looked at her as his father might look at an irresponsible striker.

"I don't wish to talk about it."

"But what shall I——"

"Cecily!"

He bent over Cecily and kissed her authoritatively. He hoped she was not going to be difficult.

She subsided gracefully. He might have trusted her to do that. But a puzzled look clouded her wide eyes.

Dinner, however, was a success. Cecily did things easily, without effort. The plates were hot, the steak cooked to a turn. Service was as noiseless as Cecily's daintily slippered feet and slim hands could make it. It was the unobtrusive service one does not notice and John took it for granted that it was no bother whatever.

"I went looking for a job to-day," he blurted at last, his desire for sympathy getting the better of his pride. But he said it so gruffly it was hard to guess that he wanted understanding.

She nodded and kissed him on his frowning forehead.

"Well?" he asked truculently.

"You're such a big, wonderful boy," she said apropos of nothing.

"Why don't you ask me what luck I had?" He was sarcastic.

"I didn't know any one ever got a job the first day he tried. I never did." She answered undisturbed. He looked up straight into her eyes and his own dropped.

"Well, I didn't. I didn't even get a hope or a promise. Every friend I ever had turned me down," he growled, but less belligerently.

"Wh—what are you planning to be?" she asked unexpectedly.

"What am I planning?" he asked blankly. "Why, I just went out for a job looking for something. I didn't care so long as I could earn a living for you."

Tears sprang quickly to her eyes.

"You're so splendid," she breathed adoringly, and came over and kissed him.

What could a man do with a girl like that?

Cecily went back to her chair and resumed eating absently. All of an instant a gleam of mischief sparkled her eyes. Then she chuckled aloud before she could catch herself.

It drew John back to earth.

"Well?" he asked.

"Nothing," she stammered. "Only a silly act at Keith's this afternoon. There was a 'Romeo and Juliet' balcony scene and the balcony was on fire, so the comedy *Romeo* tried to save *Juliet*." She had to stop to giggle a minute.

"Well," again from John impatiently.

"He had a trick ladder that he kept balancing in the center of the stage. But of course it wouldn't stand there and he didn't have sense enough to put it up against anything, and the fire kept getting fiercer. It was dreadfully silly. Then he'd leap to the top of the ladder and wabble all about and try to walk it over to the house as if it were stilts. And finally the hero came out and yanked the ladder out from under him and——"

"And—" interposed John politely.

"Why he put it up against the balcony, of course, and climbed up from the bottom, rescued the lady, and—and you know how they all come out."

She rose hurriedly and began to clear the table, giggling reminiscently now and then.

John lighted a cigar, studying her curiously. Once as she went to pass him he took hold of her wrist, stopping her abruptly.

"Do you know" he asked quietly, "that you are a very clever woman?"

She pulled away from him and for the first time in his life he saw her eyes flash.

"Don't you ever call me that again," she denied. "I won't be clever. I won't! I won't!"

He watched her leave the room, cheeks flaming. Then he went to the telephone, a wholly unaccustomed grimness on his lips. Cecily served the coffee and sat down to await him. He returned presently and stood, studying her features with narrowed, thoughtful eyes.

"I've just sold my valued services for one hundred and fifty dollars a month," he announced. "You're almost the poorest woman in the city."

"It's better than being rich and dull," she asserted stoutly. "Being poor is always an adventure. You never know what is going to happen."

"I always thought it rather messy," he said carelessly, dropping back into his chair.

"Do—do you want to tell me what you are going to do?"

He put down his coffee-cup and eyed her steadily, coolly.

"I'm putting my ladder over against the burning balcony," he said. "And I'm starting from the bottom to climb up."

"And when you get to the top?" she asked eagerly.

"You couldn't phaze her," he was thinking, but his eyes were blank.

"I shall be the best machine-tool maker in the world." Then he kissed her and strolled into the other room and got his hat and went out.

"Oh, dear," said Cicely. "I guess I must be tired," and she looked extremely pensive and young. But after a little she jumped up and cleared the table, humming a lilting air softly, musingly.

It was only later when she had slipped into a frilly negligée and was searching her purse for a powder-puff that a small pink paper fluttered to the floor.

"Now, I wonder," she asked earnestly, "what does he want me to do with Ted's check?" and "Honestly, I didn't know selling the car would hurt him so!"

JOHN'S whole attention was centered upon making good in an unimportant job. He became conscious of an atmosphere laden with the smell of lubricating oil and bits of steel. He was dirty all day long. At first resignedly dirty. Then defiantly, and at last totally unconscious of black smears on his oily face. Of finger-nails that never would come quite clean. Of a steady, all-pervading hum of machinery in his ears. Of sharp glistening edges. Of hissing molten masses! He became a slave of the relentless mechanisms, huge, inevitable, with their precise regularity. He was dwarfed in the realization of their crushing force. Puny! A mere fragment of flesh and blood futile against their strength. And yet it was the human mind that created and directed them. In his slow fancy they became a mob. The human toiling mob, unthinking performers of physical miracles through the direction and creative energy of a trained mind.

He himself became a part of the machines during the eight hours of steady daily application to his task. But when his eight hours were up he became an explorer into whys. One lesson he had learned: There was a why to everything and it was up to him to find it.

CECILY'S eagerness in the uninteresting details amused him somewhat, but it kept him keyed up to make his stories new and constructive. Her childlike quality of mind went directly to the heart of things. It was amazing how her participation kept him probing into the business of the shop.

Cecily knew how to listen. He never felt sure that she understood the slightest thing he was talking about, but her attention flattered enormously. It was only when he remembered about the ladder that he stopped abruptly in the middle of a speech to ponder. But that was never for long.

Her big eyes looking adoringly into his and the throaty eagerness of her voice soothed every doubt. Her absurd questions were forever putting him into a hole forcing him to delve deeper into problems so that he need never admit he did not know. He felt sure she thought he knew everything.

But he was not satisfied. He saw men in the shop working beside him who had stood at their places for twenty years, they would stand in similar places for as long as their strength lasted. The process was slow and tedious and uninspiring. He seemed as inevitably lost in that maze of men and humming metal as a bolt on some of the gigantic arms.

He insisted to himself sturdily that there was an idea somewhere in the world that would make him rich. He found it one evening unexpectedly. It belonged to Tony, who had been working across the aisle from him. Tony was an energetic young Italian who lived only to be among machinery. To him it was romance, art! The whirring and buzzing was music, and the planning out of new developments the glory of creation.

When Tony finished at the shop for the day he took his recreation by building more machinery by night.

John discovered him accidentally while sharing his umbrella to the subway. John wanted to answer one of Cecily's inconvenient questions about what made the wheels go around. Tony gave him the solution without trouble. What interested John most was that Tony's particular hobbies were phonograph improvements. It looked like the hand of fate.

He had two inventions which were not possible according to the trade. The first was a muffler connection which entirely eliminated the scratching sound caused by the needle. This was a labor of love to Tony, who did not like to be distracted when listening to his adored Caruso.

The second invention concerned the tone of the violin records. Tony could not afford to carry this latter to perfection. It had to do with the method of production. But he was enthusiastic regarding its principle. That his phonographic violins would be richer in tone he had no doubt. The patents he had been able to take care of, but it left him penniless. Now he would have to save and slave for another six months to go on.

John brought his news home to Cecily proudly. He was going out after capital. He said the word magnificently but with an attempt at indifference truly boyish.

"Every noon hour I'll take some bird out until I badger some one into backing us," he told her doggedly. "Though it ought not to be hard," he told her with a good deal of his old confidence. "It's a knock-out."

"How about your father?" Cecily asked timidly.

"Never to my dying day!" John asserted. "Not until he comes to me on his knees and begs." It was a grandly youthful sentiment.

Cecily sighed.

John picked up the evening paper and studied the market reports.

"If I only had a little money to play Crex steel," he murmured under his breath. "Gee whiz, but things are beginning to boom."

"Do you really think it would make money?"

"Make money," said John with the sureness of the innocent. "Why, if I'd had Crex last May, I'd have fifty thousand dollars now, enough to finance this whole thing myself. Gee whiz! It doesn't look as if it would ever come down, either."

"But wouldn't the car money——"

"Cecily!" How his heart groaned whenever he thought of his carelessness in not locking the car on that fateful day.

"But three thousand——"

"Cicely, I don't want you to mention that car again. It's a sore point with me."

"Oh, I know, dear," she said desperately. "But why let——"

She could not finish her remark. John had his father's way about him.

"Besides," said John, "I wouldn't have had Crex steel. I would have sold it. I thought it was bringing a good price then and business looked ripe for a slump. I would have sold it."

"But how could you if you did not have it?"

"That's the stock market," John explained patiently. "You sell if things are high and then you buy them when they drop."

Cecily shook her head.

"I don't see how you can give some one something you haven't got."

John ran his fingers through his hair wondering how he was going to explain it anyway.

"And suppose it doesn't drop?"

"That's the answer," relieved. "It didn't. So I would have been no better off with Ted's money."

"But what shall I——"

But John had had enough of humility. The Stickneys were not given to it overly much.

"You will keep your adorable mouth shut."

Cecily sighed again. At times John was difficult.

"But some day," John surprised her, "I'm going down and make Carterhorn writhe for closing me out without my orders."

John had been nursing a grievance. The fact that Carterhorn had saved him money from his prompt action when the market rose only made the smart worse.

Cecily caught the inflection of chagrin and womanlike wanted to avenge him. Right or wrong he was her man and must be vindicated.

A glowing thought thrilled her. John was angry with her for selling the car. She could kill two birds with one stone. She could make Carterhorn be respectful and show how nice it was to have a little cash instead of a car they could not afford. She had everything to gain and nothing to lose since John refused to touch the money anyway.

Cecily fairly burst with information all the rest of the evening, but John was too busy figuring how to get victims for Tony to heed the trivial activities of mere woman.

IT WAS several months of consistent and persistent trying without result that made John's spirits lag. Credit had been his birthright and yet he could not make any one take him seriously. He was old Peter's son. A rich man's progeny. A joke!

At first he was incredulous. That a Stickney could be refused money and by those who had toadied to him for years. That men could be so dull as not to see the popularity of his discoveries! He felt sure he could sell the ideas to Victoria or Columbian or any of his father's competitors, but he wanted it to be a going thing that he and Tony could really cash in on. It was maddening. A fortune within sight while they toiled along on a hundred and fifty a month!

He was appalled at the lack of human foresight. Overwhelmed at the mediocrity of successful men. He dared not admit that they could defeat him by their lack.

A grudging admiration of his father began to develop slowly in his consciousness. He was failing where his father had won. His father with his unimaginative features, heavily persistent, had seen his vision materialize. He, John Stickney, educated, traveled, could not make his dream come true. His one tangible asset he had lost through his own carelessness.

He was so at odds with himself that his appetite failed him. Cecily was increasingly concerned at the thought that he, perhaps, could not stand continued poverty.

She knew herself the intense nostalgia for the lights of Broadway. The gay chatter of crowds. The thousand and one inconsequentials that had been her life for five years. How much harder it must be for John, who had been born to purple and fine linen.

She doubled her efforts to please, wondering in a dull sort of way if she had been wrong. If she had better go back to the show and leave John free to reenter his world. Only she couldn't go back just then. There was the greatest reason in the world why she could not just then.

But he could go. She would tell him that night.

John sat down to the open piano and strummed indifferently on the keys.

"Well," he said at last with an attempt at a smile. "I could have had another failure."

"Yes?" Her heart beat fast.

"I could have bought Crex at eighty."

Two red spots burned guiltily on her cheeks.

"The bottom dropped out of the market to-day," he finished bitterly and struck a loud chord to cover his sense of abject defeat. "Your husband is a good deal of a flivver." He was modulating softly. It made his light tone a hurt protest against fate. "But," his jaw shot forward suddenly, "they haven't finished us yet. We're down, but we're still fighting and I wouldn't give up the battle for a million dollars."

Cecily's pulses leaped. She went over and put both arms around his neck in a passion of relief, of adoration.

"Some day you'll realize you're the most wonderful man in all the world!"

He grinned, and caught her in his arms. A strictly truthful wife must be a great handicap to a man.

Tony came over to him in the wash-room when they were cleaning up for lunch.

"Capital, it is hard to tame." Trying not to let John see his anxiety.

"Capital is no harder to get than ideas."

"But vision, my fren', is very rare. And it takes vision to see the thing which 'as not been prove make the success."

"It takes sporting blood," growled John. "The whole trouble with our proposition is that it is too sensible."

Tony frowned, inquiringly.

"Men like the thrill of a gambler's chance or they want a sure thing. They'll put thousands into a hole in the ground where there might be oil waiting to thunder out at them. Did you ever see an oil-well come in?"

Tony shook his head.

"It's tremendous," John glowed. "It's tremendous expecting it even if it doesn't happen. Or a man will play the races—anything where the risk is exciting and the reward enormous enough to make it reckless."

Tony shrugged his shoulders.

"But men look upon business investments with common sense. Pessimism. There is no particular thrill either to success or failure. It's work. Hard continuous effort crammed with uninteresting detail. And it may take years from a man's life for nothing larger than a living wage. Success has to be built painstakingly and a bird wants to be sure the money is there before he lets himself in for monotony."

"I guess you're right," said Tony dispiritedly. "Anyway we lose."

"Oh, we do!" John's blood leaped to the challenge. "Well, dad didn't and he's a good deal of a d—" He was going to say "duffer." "He's a lot like me," he finished lamely.

The telephone operator caught him as he went out.

"There's a man been trying to get hold of you all morning," she told him. "I told him we couldn't call any one to the phone and he thought I was kidding him. Told me to can that stuff, any time John Stickney couldn't get to a phone——"

"Where is he?" John asked. "Get me his number, there's a good girl. No one will know."

IT WAS Ted just back from California. As soon as he could make coherence from Ted's ravings he discovered Ted was at the station-house.

John was incredulous.

"I said jail, you blooming idiot," thundered Ted. "What's the idea reporting the car stolen?"

"Why—why, I don't know."

"Oh, you don't? Maybe you think it's some joke. You know you sold me that car six months ago and cashed the check. And the first time I drive up Broadway I get arrested."

"You bought——"

"Now listen, Jack, cut the rough stuff.

It's not funny. You know I sent Cecily a check and she cashed it and I took the car from over by City Hall just as she told me——"

John went hot and cold by turns.

"I don't know what it's all about," he began. And then angrily "Why in blazes didn't you come into my office, keeping me worried all these months?"

"Why should I? Aren't you speaking to your wife these days? I tried to see you but you were out, you infernal jokehound. I didn't know I had to send a card to every member of the family."

"All right, Ted. I'll be right over and get you out." John was blank with amazement. His one insistent thought when he hung up the receiver was for Tony.

"Tony," he yelled like a madman, "I've got three thousand dollars."

"So you said before, ten, twenty, and now three."

John grabbed his coat lapel. "But this is mine."

"Three thousand won't put us over."

"Joy killer!" He was bribing the girl to get him his house number. His voice was fairly trembling.

"Where's Ted's three thousand?" he yelled. Why on earth hadn't she mentioned it? What was the matter with her?

"Ted's three—why, I gave it to Carterhorn."

"You gave it," John's heart stood still. "When?"

"Why, when you said the market was wonderful a long time ago. And you know you wouldn't let me mention the money to you."

John wasn't listening. His last hope had slipped. "Then that's finished," he said dully.

"The way of capital. The sudden threel," said Tony softly.

"Oh, shut up," said John. "I'm no damned quitter, if you are." There was a steely coldness in his eye when he started for the station-house.

Long after midnight John returned to the little apartment to find Cecily sitting, white-faced and tense, staring out of the window. Never before had he been absent without explanation.

He came straight to where she sat, barely conscious that she seemed cowering before his expected anger.

"Dearest," he began, and she noticed that he was tired beyond mere weariness. "I didn't think about phoning. I'm sorry. It just came over me suddenly that I had to put something over and I started out——"

AT ANY other time Cecily would have been like a stanch little rock. But Cecily was not well and she had been blaming herself for his poverty and dreading the day when its monotony and sacrifice would become unbearable. She toppled unexpectely into his arms.

John was stung into action. He picked her up, reproaching himself bitterly at his sudden realization of her extra need of him. "Brave little girl!" he murmured, knowing she had not wished to burden him with the responsibility of the added worry in his present discouraged mood. Her unselfishness! Her patience! Her gentleness, rushed into his consciousness like a flood.

He threw the window wide open and loosened her negligée that the cool air might strike her bared throat.

But as he did so he was deluged by a shower of bills. One-hundreds, one-thousands, fifties. He thought he was crazy. They made a heap like a small haystack upon the floor. Forty thousand dollars in all.

He rubbed his hand across his eyes. Then he thought of the ammonia spirits he should be getting for her. Only, by that time, Cecily had opened her eyes and was gazing wanly at him.

"I thought you had gone forever and ever," she whispered. "You said, 'Then that's finished' and——"

"Gone from you!" he questioned. Surely she would never doubt the earnestness of his voice again. "My dear, not so long as there's breath in this blundering body of mine. You know that, sweetheart. You're the very breath of me."

And then his eyes strayed to the money. He could not help it.

"I thought you wouldn't come," she said. "And I was scared, reading about burglars, and the police never do catch them."

John grinned in spite of himself. He was thinking of Ted and his unnecessary language at the station-house.

"And all that money with me——"

"Where on earth did you get it?"

She looked dumbfounded. "Why, from

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Carterhorn. I got it just as quick as I could when you asked for it. I had an awful time. He didn't like to give me cash. But I never feel the same about checks and I knew you wanted money or you wouldn't have——"

"But Cecily, the market dropped."

"Well, you said to buy when the market was high and sell when she went down——

"Good Heavens," he said weakly.

"And my father always said to sell on good news and buy on bad. He said it would make any one rich if he had the courage."

"But your father was poor!"

"I know," she returned sadly. "He never had the courage."

"If I thought you wouldn't topple over again, I'd hug you," he told her, slightly tremulous in his excitement.

Her head nestled confidently against his shoulder.

And then it all came out in John's characteristic gruff manner of confession. All the evening he had been trying to see Carlysle Henderson. His face was scarlet with humiliation.

"But you didn't?" anxiously.

"No," abjectly. "He wouldn't see me."

"Goody!"

"I might have known I had only to come home," he growled in mock fierceness. "My wife would rob a bank most any day."

And then, "It's too wonderful to happen to any man, to have a chance like this and you all in one lifetime, and what we'll do for that son of ours now—" His voice fairly shook with happiness.

"John!" Her cheeks were crimson at the unexpectedness of his accusation.

He grinned at her shamelessly, proudly.

"But why didn't you let me tell you about Ted before?" she demanded suddenly, to keep him from saying such wonderful things that she would spoil it all by crying.

Then he had to make some more confessions of his own carelessness. He rather enjoyed groveling in the dust before her, she was so zealous a defender of his cleverness. "And if you ever have any other ideas about money-making, don't say a word. You just put them over. You're the smartest little——"

"Oh, John, I don't want to be smart. I want to be loved. I only did what you told me to, John. I knew I couldn't go wrong if I did that."

John grinned complacently and waved his hand triumphantly at the world of mockers.

"DID you find out who owned those patents?" Old Peter Stickney looked formidable, looming behind his big mahogany desk.

There was an unmistakable twinkle in Carlysle Henderson's eyes.

"That was easy," he observed carelessly.

"Well?"

"They belong to a man who intends to fight for a good round royalty. Sort of a personal feeling about it."

"Personal feeling. Rot! He'll sell for our price or we'll take them away from him."

"I doubt if we do either," said Carlysle. "The Victoria people have offered him a good price and he seems well prepared to go into any court and defend his rights."

"Who the blazes is he?"

"He is a man," said Carlysle mischievously, "who tells me that he used to stand on his own foot."

"A man's got to stand on his feet," growled Peter.

"Not feet, Peter, foot! A rare and discriminating difference."

Peter grunted.

"He is a youngster who not only climbed up the ladder from the bottom, but wishes to have that ladder placed firmly against a solid structure, such as, say, your companies and backing."

"Say, what?"

"Those were his words, Peter."

"Who is this poetical genius who talks in parables and thinks in machinery?"

"He is your son, Peter, your prodigal son, who refues to be prodigaled. Sort of a fatted prodigal, as it were."

"Not John!"

"John."

"He never had the guts to—" Peter felt the chill of defeat.

"As he says, his was the energy of the babbling glistening brook, which became dynamic only when it struck the stone wall. Apologetically he thanks you for putting the stone wall in his path."

"It's not in him." Peter's voice was less sure. After all it might be a proud defeat.

"Perhaps not," agreed Carlysle, too willingly to suit. "But he has a wife. A pretty, useless, not too truthful wife!"

"You have a rare sense of what constitutes virtue in a wife," sneered Peter. "Romance and now lies."

"I have always contended that truth was greatly overrated," reflected Carlysle. "The beloved wife and mother is usually just a loving, blessed liar. A woman who sees all the wonders of the world in the plain damn fool she adores, until she bullies his vanity into making good for her."

"Stupid little idiot," Peter muttered, not meeting Carlysle's eye.

"Oh, I wouldn't say that. And speaking of romance, perhaps you remember her grandmother, little Aileen Conroy. She of the somber brown eyes and the childish trust and nightingale voice. How we boys hastened to do for her. To protect her! Ah, yes, blood tells! Aileen was protected into thousands of dollars and worshiped by every college boy of the eighties."

"Aileen Conroy?" A dull flush on Peter's cheek! A reminiscent light in his eye. "I was call-boy in the theatre where she played. She smiled at me once!" He sighed.

"But that doesn't explain John's sudden acquisition of business acumen."

"Perhaps, after all, it is Peter Stickney, second," said Carlysle quickly. "The responsibilities of fatherhood often awaken a man's latent genius, and after all he is your son."

"Peter Stickney, second," faltered the old man.

Henderson was afraid he was going to cry or be sentimental or something. After all he had not been born to reserve and the manners of gentlemen. Henderson stirred uncomfortably.

But Peter sat upright and glared at his lawyer fiercely in an attempt to belie his trembling lips.

"What did you say his terms were?" he demanded.

"A partnership in your company," Henderson might have trusted the inherent greatness of the man. "A chance for a certain Tony, the opportunity of learning your business from the ground up and you to come on your knees to beg him to do it."

"And all for a couple of measly ideas which we were doing very well without."

"The last-named stipulation because it might amuse young Peter." Fine crinkles were in the corners of Carlysle Henderson's understanding eyes.

"Oh, all right," muttered Peter thickly. "I ought to do something for Peter."

Bagdad

By Harry Lee

DREAMER—I am a dreamer too,
Searching for Bagdad even as you.

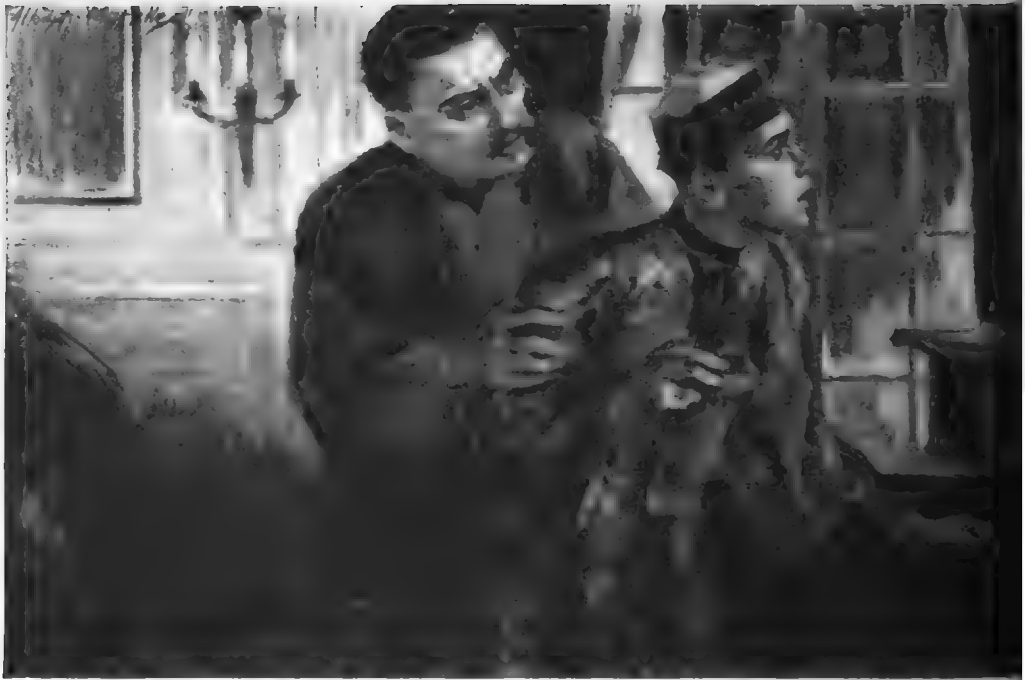
Oft have I sighted a towered town,
From a windy hilltop laughing down,
Oft have I followed its elfin flute,
But when I entered my soul was mute.

Lost in the babel of song and shout,
Barterers, banterers, all the rout,
And this be not Bagdad, tell me, I pray,
O good my brother, tell me the way.

Over the desert, over the sea,
Always, always, ahead of thee.
Who finds it not, the most is blest,
For with the finding ends the quest.

Dreamer—I am a dreamer too,
Searching for Bagdad even as you.

Everybody's Magazine, October, 1921



"Boy, walk to me," said Chen softly. "I forbid you," stormed Kito, seizing the boy's arm

The Limp of the Clan Chen

Illustrations by

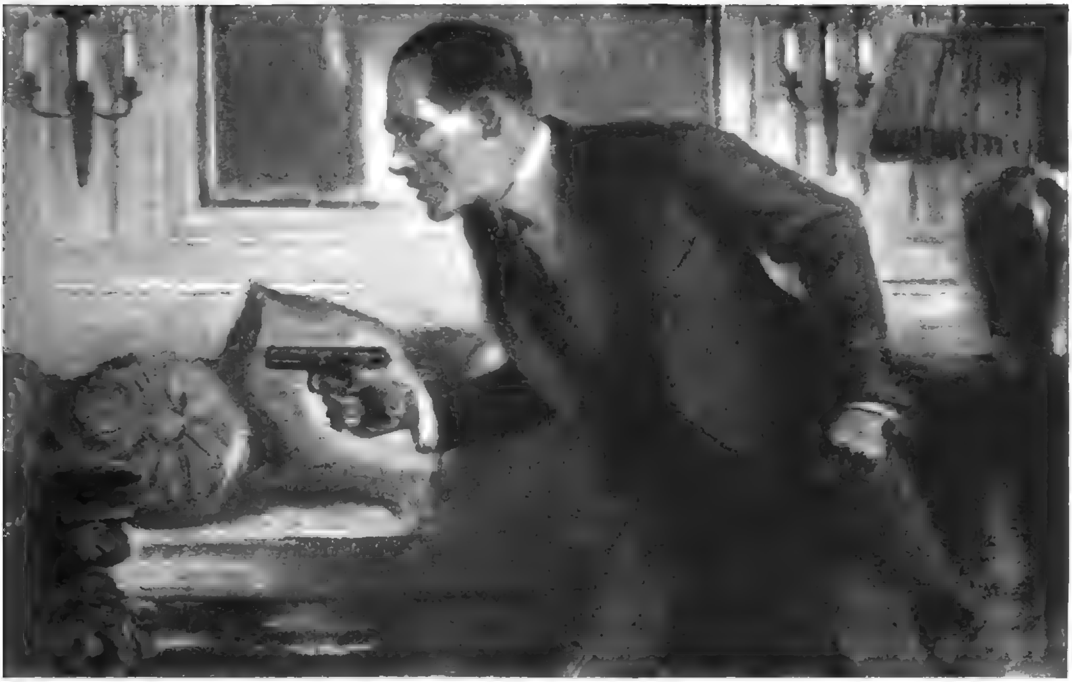
Death May Come to Oriental
Never Die—At Least not
a Way of

THE pace of his Excellency Chi Li Chen slackened as he reached the edge of the snow-line, but increased again for a hundred meters or more where his skis fluffed into a pocket of snow that lay in the blue shadow of the Cret d'y Beau. At the rim of the pocket the brown earth showed an uncompromising barrier, and he turned and checked in a flurry of flying white particles.

For a moment he stood, an odd little figure, leaning on his ski-sticks. His mask of a face was turned to the valley below and the green-gray spread of the lake. Then he shuffled forward to a promising boulder, sat down and, stripping his gloves, began slowly to unbuckle the straps which bound his feet to the runners.

He sat for a long time motionless as though reluctant to leave the solitude of the mountains. Then, searching slowly through the pockets of his woolen jacket, he produced a pipe and as slowly filled it, his thin yellow fingers caressing the polished bowl, his black eyes fixed absently on the valley slope below, white with the white of narcissii. His appearance was unpleasing, revolting almost at first sight. The cheeks were bosses of bone, the skin so tightly drawn over the eyes that they were thin slits, revealing eyes that glittered like black gems. The prognathic jaw out-thrust gave an almost sinister character to his face, and the conventional winter-sports kit he wore, the hairy stockings about his thin legs, the ill-fitting coat that hung loosely upon his narrow shoulders made him something grotesque, ludicrous, if the forbidding face had not stifled laughter in a vague sense of uneasiness.

He lit his pipe, puffing a solemn blue



"Walk to me, or one of you dies," said Chen, and the automatic in his hand was suggestive.

By Edgar Wallace

Albert Matzke

Feudists, But Oriental Feuds until Oriental Cunning Finds Evening the Scales

cloud into the sweet mountain air, and he permitted his thoughts to return to a personal matter. The man who had juggled with trained diplomatists at the Lucerne Convention and who had forced his opponents into a corner over the absorbing question of the Shin Chien concessions was as incapable of drifting to a speculation as he was incapable of drifting to a conclusion. He took the matter of the Lady Mi Li Chen from a mental pigeonhole and laid it open with all its memoranda, its cross-references and indices. Nor was it a dog-eared, soiled and tattered memory he produced, slurred with the romantic sentimentalism with which the years soften and color the hard and ugly angles of life. It was new, legible and unamended.

The minister plenipotentiary felt neither anger nor resentment at that moment either against the Lady Chen or his Excellency Viscount Kito. The girl had always hated him. That was a staple of the situation, a truth beyond challenge. From the day he brought her to his *yamen* in Kiao-Chow city she had been hostile, hateful. This he had known in advance, so that he had faced the drab potentialities open-eyed.

Even when he had gone to the family temple to announce his betrothal to the spirits of his ancestors, and particularly to that Lady Chen who was such a model of the domestic virtues that the Emperor Ch'ien Lung had celebrated her qualities in a poem written by his own hand with a vermilion pencil, he had made no secret of his apprehension.

"I inform the noble spirit of Lady Chen that I am taking to my house Mi Chi Lou, a woman of beautiful appearance, but of a stubborn and unkind disposition, and I pray that the blessings of my illustrious ancestors who sleep on the Terrace of Night will bless my marriage," he said, and burned strips of gilt paper suitably and reverently inscribed.

It was a splendid marriage for Mi; for the Chen clan was the most powerful in the Middle Kingdom and was especially favored by the Daughter of Heaven. And Chen himself was not only head of that clan, but had proved himself efficient in the Six Arts. At the age of twenty-seven he had passed the examinations and had become successively Flower of Talent, Promoted Scholar and Fit for Office. Three months after he married her he assumed the proud title of "Dweller in the Forest of Pencils," for he had entered the Han Lin, the highest of the educational orders.

Chen blew a ring of smoke and watched it drifting, a whirling wheel of gray-blue framing for a second the hogback crest of the Juras.

The American university came later, after Mi had vanished from his house. He was too great a philosopher to feel the acute misery of self-pity. He understood without approving the fascinations of the well-tailored attaché at the Court of the Daughter of Heaven. Nippon was spending generously in those days, for she had not yet acquired the footing which the war against China gave her. There were receptions and dinners in the European fashion, and for a spell Mi had been almost bearable and he was glad that he had not followed the advice of the family council and divorced her, as he had every right to do; for she was violent and had given him no children. As to this latter failure she had said once that if she knew that she was to bear him a son she would throw herself into the big well. This at the end of a shrieking tornado of fury aroused by his mildest reproach. He had taken a stick to beat her; but his heart had failed, for she was the sun of his life—a sun eclipsed when he returned from a mission into Tibet; for she had gone, and the tall, good-looking Japanese attaché had sailed by the same steamer. To be finally eclipsed in the material sense three years later when she lay down upon the Terrace of Sleep where the dead dream through æons of time.

Seventeen years! Chen knocked out the ashes of his pipe and bared his teeth as he recharged it. Seventeen years of wars, revolutions, studies, intrigues of court and embassy and at the end a garish council-room in the canton of Lucerne with its mirrors and its glass candelabra and its fussy old men with bulging portfolios and across the green table, face to face for the first time, his Excellency Viscount Kito, Minister Extraordinary to His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Japan.

Not so slim as he was in those days when he pranced and prinked behind his ambassador in Peking. Not so smoothly modeled as when he whispered appropriate extracts from the Chinese classics into the petal ear of a twittering Lady Chen. They had bowed, excellency to excellency, their secretaries had unfastened bloated wallets and disgorged innumerable documents; but the wide-eyed spirit of Lady Chen had stared across the fat shoulder of one excellency into the unwinking eyes of another.

CHEN directed himself to wonder why Kito had come to Glion. The conference had ended abruptly and the fussy old men of all nationalities had sped Pariswards by special train. He himself was on his way to Rome to confer with the ambassador before sailing to South America. Perhaps the inaccurate *Gazette de Luzern* had announced his arrival in Rome. Otherwise Kito would not have brought his family to Glion. But being there, he would not shirk a meeting and was in truth toiling up the mountainside to intercept his enemy on his return.

Chen saw him a long way off and limped down the rough path toward him, carrying his skis across his shoulder. Chen limped because of a malformation of the left tibia which was the Chen heritage. All the Chens for a thousand years had been born with that curious shin-bone. It was as characteristic of the Chen family as is the jaw of the Bourbon, and even the impure stock of the clan would limp in imitation, so that it was said of Kiao-Chow where every other man was named "Chen" that it was "a city of short legs." He limped down the hill until he came to a patch of wood where the ground was a carpet resilient with pine-needles. Men had been felling the trees for fire-wood, and he found a trunk that enabled him to sit with his back to the sun and waited, putting his skis very carefully and orderly under his legs.

"Good morning, your Excellency." Kito's voice was loud and cheerful and he spoke in English.

Chen was standing now, his head bowed respectfully.

"It is an unexpected pleasure, your Excellency," he said, and they both sat, Kito on the softly cushioned earth.

"You have been mountaineering?"

The viscount glanced at the skis and his big good-humored face puckered again in a smile. "I am a little too fat for that form of exercise."

"Hardly mountaineering."

Chen could not smile. Nature had not so designed his face. He could display two rows of large teeth from gum to gum and this he did.

"It was quite a pleasant surprise to learn that you had broken your journey in Switzerland," said Kito again.

He was rolling a cigaret and his thick fingers were extraordinarily quick and skilful in this delicate operation. "I understood from the new *Gazette* that you had left for Boulogne to catch the South American packet."

So it was the *Gazette* which had brought Kito to the lake.

"Are you staying for long?" asked Chen politely, and the viscount, who was trimming the ends of his cigaret, did not look up.

"I think we shall go away to-morrow," he said. "The climate does not quite suit my son."

Chen stared past him to Les Avants, a speckle of white buildings on the far side of the valley.

"It will give me great pleasure to call and pay my respects to your Excellency's son," he said gravely, and Kito, who had finished fidgeting with his cigaret, struck a match. The flame did not quiver, nor did Chen expect to witness any visible sign of the man's perturbation. "I hope that you have many sons—such gifts are fortunes from heaven."

"It will be a great honor to me," replied Kito soberly. "My son, who is delicate, would call at your Excellency's hotel but that I fear the exertion would not be to his advantage. And he is the one man child of my house."

Chen waved his thin hands in sympathy.

"Are you comfortable at your hotel?" asked Kito still in a conversational vein. "There are not many people in Territet just now."

Chen showed his teeth again.

"Many more than are essential to my happiness," he said dryly, "a party of American and English ladies, one of whom insists upon discussing the 'mysterious East' with me. To my mind, the mystery of the East was solved in the days when Europe wallowed in barbarism. They have merely imposed their own mystery upon us. None so readily apply the principle *obscurum per obscurius*."

THE viscount shifted his legs to a more comfortable position.

"It was lamentable that the concession was not approved, your Excellency," he said, bringing to the occasion the atmosphere of the council chamber. "I can not understand why the powers should imagine that a little lease for twenty years would imperil the sovereignty of your republic."

"Twenty years is a very long time," said Chen. "I think it was Machiavelli who said that a government may in safety surrender its revenues of millions, but is ruined by the concession of a ducat's worth of principles. It is conceivable that the lease would have been fatal to the integrity of the adjoining province."

He rubbed the bowl of his pipe along the palm of his hand, patted down the ragged ends of the tobacco and smoked peacefully through the silence which followed.

"Perhaps your Excellency was considering your own position, if you had given way upon this point," said Viscount Kito gently. "It might not have been necessary to have returned to Peking with a story of failure, or, for the matter of that, with any story."

Chen did not reply for some time.

"The censure of my government was a possibility which did not distress me," he said simply; "but if I had failed I could not have faced my ancestors."

And Kito nodded.

"Is your family here?" he asked unnecessarily.

"I have no family." Chen looked at the viscount for the first time.

"That is a terrible misfortune," said Kito gravely. "I should have thought with your Excellency's high position and honorable standing that your house would have been full."

Chen did not shift his gaze. The spirit of the little lady with the raven hair might have lifted a tremulous hand to her lips did she sit amidst the purple shadows of the pines watching the play.

"When the vine is burned there is no fruit," quoted Chen. "My very honorable lady wife has been amidst the flowers for many years."

Kito murmured his condolences. "My third wife is young and very lively," he said. "She is with my younger children in London and it is expected that she will bear her fourth child in a month if the gods favor me, though none of the women of her family have borne anything but girls. I am disturbed, however," he frowned, "greatly disturbed by certain dreams she has had and a succession of omens."

He discussed gravely his wife's unhappy experience. She had seen four shooting stars on one night and had heard a cockerel crowing at the moon. Then suddenly he rose and changed the conversation abruptly.

"ONE still hopes, your Excellency, that the recources of diplomacy are not yet exhausted in relation to the concession. We have endeavored to live in peace and harmony with our neighbors and may yet live."

Chen bared his teeth in that invisible smile of his. "After all, this is not a matter which especially and particularly affects the Republic. Only France favors your suggestion."

He walked down the hill at the big man's side with that curious up-and-down swing of his body which his infirmity produced and they spoke of policies and people, of distant cities, of embassies and their disadvantages, but never once did they speak of the Lady Chen who was asleep with the flowers.

Presently they came to a station on the little mountain railway and parted at Glion, bowing deeply excellency to excellency, and the stolid Swiss railway porters watched the genuflections with considerable amusement.

Mr. Chen was well satisfied with the comfort of his room. Its loftiness, the view from the iron balcony, the wealth of narcissus and daffodil and lavender-hued violets were narcotics to his active mind. He paced his saloon in his nailed boots for half an hour, and then he rang a little hand-bell that stood on the table. His secretary, Li San, with the inseparable portfolio under his arm and his great horn spectacles on his nose, came instantly.

"Tao?" he greeted.

"Li San," replied Chen slowly, "his Excellency Viscount Kito is staying at the Beau Rivage Hotel with his honorable family. I will give myself the felicity of calling on him this afternoon. Bring me paper that I may write an ode in his honor. Open also a tin of foreign tobacco and ask the concierge if there is in his library a copy of Machiavelli's 'Florentine History.' I wish to verify a quotation I made this morning."

When the secretary had gone, Chen resumed his restless pacing, his hands were clasped behind his back, his eyes never raised from the carpet. And seeing his heart, the spirit of the Lady Chen may well have wrung her thin hands in tragic despair. Kito must not carry on his line. Kito, who had broken the thread that led back to Genghis Khan—generation on generation of lordly Chens without a break.

He passed presently into his bedroom and opened his trunk. Lifting out the tray and groping amid his clothing he brought out a small lacquered box which he carried to his room. From the box he took a short-barreled automatic pistol and slipped the magazine from the butt. Then he brought forth a sealed package of ammunition and very carefully opened the cardboard lid. One by one he pressed the cartridges into the magazine until it would hold no more. Then he took up the pistol and pulled back the steel "jacket" quickly, snapped the trigger and pushed the magazine back into the butt until it clicked tight. Then carefully, almost gingerly, he pulled back the pistol jacket and a cartridge was pressed into the chamber.

He set the catch at safety, looked at the deadly little thing lying in the palm of his hand and put it into his hip pocket. When Li San came back to the room, the lacquered box had disappeared and his excellency was standing by the window, looking out upon the lake. Li San laid a dilapidated book upon the table.

"There is only an English edition, Tao," he said.

"That will serve," replied Chen without turning round. "Li Sen, you are acquainted with the blessed words of the Master. Tell me, Li San, have I served the Republic well and without reproach?"

This time, he spoke in English, and Li San, a doctor of philosophy of the Imperial University and moreover a bachelor of arts of the University of Oxford, replied in the same language and without hesitation.

"Your Excellency has worked well for the Republic," he said.

"What said the Master?" asked Chen. All his life had he been bound by the Confucian creed. There was not a character in the *Lun Yu* which he had not read a score of times. "There are three duties which a man owes," he said slowly. "They are to his parents and ancestors; to his emperor and State; and to his friends. And the greatest of these is his duty to his ancestors."

" 'The Foundation of happiness is filial piety,' " quoth Li San.

"That is so."

Chen turned from the window and went to a small desk and wrote half a dozen lines in his crabbed caligraphy.

"You will take this to the chemist's, Li San, and if they are reluctant to make up this prescription you will tell them that I am a doctor of medicines."

Li San looked at the prescription, holding the paper close to his myopic eyes.

" 'Hydrocyanic acid, a drachm,' " he read.

"You will also procure a small hypodermic syringe and then go on to Montreux. Opposite to the steamboat pier there is a confectioner's where they sell chocolates which are filled with wine—liqueur," he corrected himself. "Bring me one kilo of those—and return quickly."

LI SAN left the room without a word of comment and Chen went back to the big table in the center of the saloon, where his secretary had placed a pad of paper, brushes and ink, and without hesitation began his complimentary poem to Viscount Kito.

He painted the complicated characters with extraordinary rapidity and he did not hesitate for a figure of speech. It was a poem about a gentle wind that came from the eastern seas when they were all dark with night and the zephyrs bore on their "soft palms" the jewels of Beauty and Wisdom and laid them at the feet of Kito. Like every educated Chinaman, he could construct couplets with facility; for had he not qualified for the Hin Sin by a poetical essay on the life of the Great Lord Confucius?

Li San came back while the ink was still wet and shining on the paper and placed the packages at his master's hand.

"Let this ode be tied with a white ribbon," said Chen, "and get ready for me all the letters and reports which require my signature. Make a very careful search for every document connected with the State and place them in an envelope for sealing."

His own private correspondence he destroyed before he went any further. When that was done, he opened the packages which Li San had brought, washed the hypodermic syringe, and collecting three of the chocolate confections placed them on the table. The label on the little phial which had come from the chemist bore the words in French: "Guard. This is death!" and he drew back his lips to show his teeth at the quaint wording. Then he settled to the serious business of the afternoon. Very gingerly he inserted the needle of the syringe into one of the chocolates and drew out a pink fluid. It was the highly flavored "liqueur" of the sweetmeat. This he did to the three and each time he squirted the contents into the little phial and noted with satisfaction that there was sufficient coloring matter to turn the contents of the bottle to a pale pink.

When he had emptied the three, he filled the syringe from the bottle and pressed home the needle into the hollow candy until it had taken its capacity and the liquid was oozing forth around the needle. With a pinch of his fingers he closed the tiny puncture and presently he was finished. He put away the needle, emptied the remainder of the deadly acid down the bath waste, cleaned and packed the needle in its case and dropped it into his trunk.

Then he changed his clothes, dressing carefully in a tail coat, patent boots and a glossy silk hat. He did not forget to change the little pistol from his baggy mountaineering breeches to the carefully creased trousers he assumed for the purpose of the call.

It was half-past four o'clock when he stepped out of the *funiculaire* at Glion and walked to the Beau Rivage, carrying a little parcel in one gloved hand and a small roll of manuscript in the other. The Viscount met him at the door of his suite and led him into the saloon. A tall boy rose at their entrance and made a reverence.

"May I present my unworthy son to your Excellency," said Kito, and Chen bowed and walked slowly toward the youth who stood in the place where he had risen.

He wore a dark-blue gown embroidered in black, and his face was thin and refined. It was the face of an aristocrat as surely as Kito's was the face of a plebeian.

"Will you permit my son to be seated, for he is not strong?"

It was not curious that Viscount Kito, Minister Extraordinary to the Court of the Child of Heaven, should be wearing native dress. It was more remarkable that he kept his hands concealed in his long sleeves, for that is the mark of courtesy which is not Japanese. Chen duly noticed this fact and suspected a concealed weapon, not without good cause. Perhaps the restless and fearful spirit of Lady Chen had whispered urgently, frantically into the stout man's ear, and he, without understanding, had grown fearful. He had to uncover his hands to receive the poem, and there was an irregular bulge in the capacious sleeve.

"Your Excellency is most kind," he said with a smile, and the boy, who had seated himself at Chen's earnest gesture, reached out and half rose to take the verse from his father's hand.

"Boy, keep still!" said the viscount sharply, and the lad sank back again.

"My son is a great reader of Mandarin," said Kito apologetically, and Chen's head turned slowly toward the door.

The boy did not look ill. There was a brightness in his eye and a certain suggestion of latent vigor in the very set of his shoulders that advertised rude health. He was quick in his movements, too, quick to drop his eyes under the angry glance which Viscount Kito had thrown at him.

"This boy dislikes his father," said Chen to himself, and was mildly interested.

"Have you seen this beautiful country before?" he asked, and to his surprise the boy answered in faultless Mandarin.

"No, lord; but I wish to go to the mountains and to ride upon the big water, but most I wish to see the river."

He half twisted round and pointed to the green Rhône which flows into the lake hereabouts.

"The master has said that it is good to look upon a river because its flow never ceases, and it nourishes all living things without labor. It is like virtue, for it loves the low places, yet cities follow its course."

He quoted the famous passage from the *Lun Yu* without error, and Chen's narrow eyes blinked twice. Then very slowly, and with deliberation, he unwrapped the package of chocolates he had brought, and there was neither pity nor remorse nor fear in his heart. He took one between his fingers.

"Whosoever speaks well of the sage his mouth shall be filled with sweetness," he quoted, and the boy opened his lips.

Before they could close on the morsel, Kito with a roar had sprung between them and had dashed the chocolates to the ground. He stood puffing, his face gray, his eyes a blazing hell of fury.

"My son is ill, Excellency," he breathed. "It is not permitted to give him sweetmeats."

SO IT had failed. Chen had foreseen the possibility. He turned blandly and unmoved to the shaking man.

"I quite understand," he said, showing his teeth. "It was foolish of me."

Both his hands were on his hips, his legs were apart and his fingers were touching that which was in his hip pocket.

"I am sorry, Excellency," rumbled Kito; "but it is forbidden—your Excellency understands."

"Oh, quite!" Chen's voice was almost brisk. He limped across the room toward the door. "It was very foolish of me," he said, and turning saw that the viscount was in his line of fire. And then a curious thing happened.

Kito's back was turned to the boy, and after a furtive glance the boy rose and stepped noiselessly to where the sweetmeat lay and was stooping to pick it up when in a strangled voice Chen cried, "Stop!"

Kito swung round and saw the boy in the act of stooping and went livid.

"Boy, walk to me!" said Chen softly.

"I forbid you," stormed Kito, seizing the boy's arm.

"Walk to me, or one of you dies," said

Chen, and the automatic in his hand was suggestive.

Instinctively Kito released his hold and the boy, after a wondering glance at the man at his side, limped across the room. Chen's breath sounded like a whistle.

"You bade him sit still in one place that he should not walk," his voice was softer yet. "He must not walk lest I read the riddle of his halting feet. O my lovely son!"

"Go and dress yourself, little love," he said, and the lad, not looking at Kito, went stiffly from the room.

As for Kito, he was sitting on the piano-stool, his jaw fallen, his lips working tremulously, as Chen walked across the room, picked up the chocolate, and tossed it into the fire. The box followed.

"Your Excellency," said Chen in his queerly accurate English, as he brushed his hands together, "many years ago the Lady Mi Chen, the wife of my heart and soul, took a little journey because of her health to the land of your fathers. Your Excellency, who is so very wise, may know of her arrival. I myself was in Tibet for half a year on the business of the emperor. Tell me now, Excellency, when was her man child born?"

For the second time that day Viscount Kito licked his lips, for he was of the caste which does not lie, even if the origin of his family had been lowly.

"I knew a lady who hated her husband," he said, "and because she had found there was a child coming to her and to him, she hated him more, so she went with one who was a great lover of hers, and stayed and comforted him until the gods touched her lips."

There was a knock at the door, and Chen turned, expecting to meet his child. Instead was a prosaic *chasseur* with a telegram on a plate.

Kito took the message and broke the flap mechanically. "Excuse me," he said, with almost uncanny politeness.

HE READ the message three times, and then was speaking when the boy came back.

"Malki," he said, "this man is your father and you will go with him, and if I have treated you harshly I have also treated you kindly, so think well of me. Your Excellency may take your son and may he be as great a blessing to you as my little boy will be to me."

He looked rapidly at the telegram again, and then for a time he looked on Chen with moist eyes.

"My wife has borne me a son," he said in a tremulous voice.

Chen was silent for a moment, then:

"May I congratulate your Excellency?" he said; and they bowed, excellency to excellency.

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In November EVERYBODY'S—*out October 15th*

Everybody's Magazine, October, 1921

The fugitive was as light on her feet as a deer. She cleared the low fence at a bound, crossed the road and made straight for the taxicab.

DONALD
TEAGUE
1921

A Complete Novel

Twenty-Four Hours

Much Can Happen in Twice Around the Clock in New York to a Little Princess Held Prisoner by Desperado Diplomats who are Gambling with a Throne as the Stake

By Beldon Duff

Illustrations by Donald Teague

JARED MARSHALL KNOX, JR., affectionately known to his friends and a good many other people as "Jerry," tossed aside his copy of the *Times* and lifted the silver lid that covered the deviled kidneys.

It was then that he discovered the slip of paper.

With the spoon poised in mid-air, he gazed at it in astonishment. The astonishment changed to a vague uneasiness; and yet, except for its quality and texture, it was just like any other sheet of paper. It was blank. Not a mark appeared upon its smooth white surface. It was thin, but not transparent, a cross between rice paper and the onion tissue used by architects. Jerry picked it up to examine it more closely; and as he shifted it from the direct sunlight a curious change in its appearance took place. Across the white surface a message scrawled itself in amber-colored letters that glowed like the flame from a blacksmith's forge. He dropped the thing hurriedly.

Once more it lay upon his plate, an innocent sheet of blank paper.

"Where the devil did that come from?" he asked sharply.

Tohari could not account for its appearance. He only knew that he had found it under his master's chair and had put it on the table. A moment before there had been nothing there; quite evidently it could not have come by itself, and yet it had arrived. His Oriental mind refused to be perturbed. He poured the coffee.

Knox rumpled his red hair with quick, nervous fingers. He was beginning to doubt the testimony of his own senses. He reached for the thing again. Instantly its message flashed out at him. He had an uncanny feeling that it squirmed between his fingers. His brows knitted in an effort to reconcile the facts. Then he laughed.

By Jove, he had it now: The thing was meant to be funny. Some practical joker was trying to make a fool of him. Well, little Jerry wasn't going to fall for anything like that.

He crumpled the paper and made as though to consign it to oblivion. Some thought, however, stayed his hand; he smoothed it out again and laid it beside his coffee-cup. He watched it for a moment as it lay there, sinister, with a leering crease across its surface.

Across the top in small, crabbed characters was written:

> I speak with the voice of one who has passed beyond the veil and has All Knowledge. Take heed!

And underneath in a bold running hand:

> The woman I love is alone—destitute—in danger. KEITH COLLINGWOOD.

And Keith Collingwood had been dead for more than six months.

Jerry whistled softly. He had a healthy disbelief in the supernatural and knew all about that sort of bunk. He had tried it himself with some success in his last five-thousand-word short story. Nevertheless he felt a queer creepy chill go crawling down his spine. Then he said: "Oh, piffle!"

Obviously his first surmise was correct. It was all a joke—rotten bad taste to joke about a thing like that; but some fellows had a queer sense of humor. It was absurd to think of any one connected with the Collingwoods being poor. Why, Keith's mother was a twentieth-century Mrs. Ali Baba. She had to count her money with a quart measure.

Whoever this smart Aleck was, he must have known Keith Collingwood, and known him pretty well. It was exactly the way Keith would have written the thing if the message had been genuine and the woman he loved in danger—no explanations—no appeal—just a plain statement of facts. The rest was up to Jerry.

Knox closed his eyes and permitted himself to drift back across the years. He and Keith had not met since—when was it? Oh, yes, Keith was sailing on the *Mauretania*. He was going to take a post-graduate course at the University of Bresnia, chemistry or physics, or was it hygiene? Well, whatever it was, it had meant the parting of the ways. Funny how lives met, merged and drifted into separate channels again. In the old days the bond had been so strong—that gag about Damon and Phintias just about described it—and now—Jove!—it was a beastly shame to think of old Keith being counted out in the first round. What a tremendous sort of chap he had been; a viking, blond and clean and fearless, the biggest man on the Yale team. Two years in succession he had smashed through the Princeton line to score the winning down.

Jerry rose and paced the length of the studio, puffing viciously at his cigaret.

This woman referred to in the mysterious communication must mean Keith's wife. What was the story of his marriage he had heard at the club—too fragmentary to make much impression and quite gone by now. He had been in a French hospital when the letter from his sister brought the news of the tragedy. That, and a few meager details gleaned from a newspaper had been all; but he recalled now that Eileen had added a postscript reminding him it was customary to send cards, and mentioning some hotel—the Vanderbilt—yes, that was it. He smiled grimly. So like Eileen, to think of the proprieties with the whole world at war.

HE PICKED up the crumpled slip of paper and read it again, then folded it carefully and crossed over to his desk. It should have the dignity of a pigeonhole all to itself. His lips compressed themselves into a straight, obstinate line. He was not through with the matter—not by a jugful. He clapped his hands.

With a soft pattering of rubber soles Tohari appeared at his elbow.

"My hat and stick," commanded his master.

If only for old times' sake, he would look in at the Vanderbilt. He could use his judgment concerning the letter. He might tell Mrs. Collingwood—he might not. Jerry had a masculine horror of scenes.

Tohari returned with the hat and stick.

Knox tried to picture the woman he was setting out to find. She must be something pretty good if Keith had fallen for her. The situation had a touch of the bizarre that appealed to him. Perhaps——

The telephone jangled. He signaled with an eyebrow to Tohari and the Japanese sprang to the receiver.

"Who is it?" demanded Jerry, half-way to the door and fuming to be off.

"Mr. Bennet."

Percival Bennet was an obsession. He owed his position on the *Morning Star* to Jerry and he never let him forget it for a minute. Like a cat with her first mouse, the enthusiastic cub reporter dragged in every item of news and laid it proudly before his unhappy benefactor. He bobbed up morning, noon and night—smoked Jerry's cigarets—wasted Jerry's time. His latest "scoop" had ruined the best part of a day.

Knox groaned. "What's he want?"

Tohari inquired, then carefully covered the receiver with his palm and transmitted the message, his face a broad grin.

"Mr. Bennet he say, he leave book and gloves on Mr. Knox's desk. He call by-and-by for same."

"The deuce he will! Well, you tell him to call some time this morning. I won't be back till afternoon."

Jerry slammed the door after him and heaved a sigh of relief. So much for Bennet—now for the lady.

BUT half an hour later when he presented himself at the Vanderbilt he was informed that no Mrs. Collingwood was staying at the hotel. It brought him up with a jerk.

Back on Fifth Avenue once more, considerably crestfallen, he paused uncertainly. It was not in the Knox make-up to quit; but he admitted that the affair was developing unexpected difficulties. Not until he had permitted himself to be drawn into the current of humanity that was moving north did he have an inspiration. Nobody but Jerry would have recognized it as an inspiration, because it took the form of Mr. Caddington Piermont, a fat, wheezy little gossip who kept all the men at the club ducking.

"Cadgy" suggested possibilities. Jerry reached out as the little man approached and hooked one plump elbow with his stick. Mr. Caddington Piermont swung around with the elasticity of a rubber ball. He was surprised and suspicious at the cordiality of Jerry's greeting and showed it. It took tact to save the situation; but once settled in a comfortable armchair at the club, he relaxed; and Knox saw that it was safe to approach the subject uppermost in his thoughts.

"Cadgy," he asked suddenly, "did you ever meet Mrs. Keith Collingwood?"

Mr. Caddington Piermont flushed to where the roots of his hair had once been.

"Why do you ask?" he inquired, eying his questioner sharply.

"Oh, I was only wondering what she was like." The innocence of Jerry's tone disarmed suspicion. "In going over some of my things I happened to dig up a souvenir of my college days, something that belonged to Keith, and I thought maybe she might like to have it." He paused and tapped the toe of his boot with his stick. "I've never met the lady and I hoped you could give me a line on her—you're so eternally thick with the Collingwoods, you know."

The little man fidgeted. He seemed to be debating some question with himself. At last he blurted out:

"Take my advice Knox—don't have anything to do with her. She's an unpleasant young woman—most unpleasant. The Collingwoods were quite right when they refused to recognize her as a daughter."

Jerry's eyebrows went up.

"Wors'n that. She absolutely refused to be recognized. Behaved like a lunatic when they offered her a sort of pension after Keith's death. Tore up the check—threw it in Mrs. Collingwood's face. Absolutely outrageous!"

"That's funny," murmured Knox, a perplexed frown wrinkling his forehead.

"Funny," snapped Piermont. "Well, that's how you look at it. Bad form, it strikes me, bad form. But then, what can you expect from a moving-picture actress?"

A great light broke in on Jerry. He slapped his knee.

"Wait! Now I begin to remember. She was Enid Hadley, a movie star, wasn't she? And the Collingwoods didn't like it when Keith married her. It was a runaway affair—Little Church Around the Corner and all that business."

Jerry was far away on some train of thought and his abstraction nettled Cadgy.

"Movie star!" He made no effort to conceal his contempt. "That's good! What gave you that idea? Second Mary Pickford, eh? Nothing to it. Just a cheap little second-rater. Melodrama was more in her line. Raved about her love for Keith and refused—positively refused—to give up his name no matter what sums they offered her."

Knox's cigaret crushed limply between his fingers. "So *that* was the little black man in their wood-pile, was it? They tried to make her give up her husband's name. They're a great bunch."

"Well, of course you can appreciate the Collingwood point of view. Mrs. Collingwood hated to see the family name exploited on the billboards."

"But she hadn't attempted to use the name for such purposes, had she?"

"No," admitted Piermont grudgingly, "but you never can tell where such a person will break out—it's best to be on the safe side. She's an impossible type—quite impossible. After Carter, the younger brother, told me how she had behaved, and how heart-broken his mother was, I thought I would see what I could do, so I hunted her up. Just out of consideration for the Collingwoods—you understand—" He paused.

"Yes, I understand," agreed Knox dryly.

"I may as well tell you that I had a terrible experience." Cadgy squirmed forward in his chair and shook a pudgy, impressive forefinger. "She quite mistook my motives. Ordered me out of the house. Threatened to call the person who ran the low place."

"It must have been fierce." Jerry bit his lip to hide a smile. "But I'd take it as a favor if you'd pass along the address."

Cadgy watched while his companion unlimbered his long legs and rose to his feet. A vague discontent flickered in his watery blue eyes, but he scribbled something on a card and held it out.

Knox made a wry face. "Not a very classy neighborhood, I take it."

Cadgy raised his white manicured hands in an expressive gesture. "Impossible," he murmured, "quite impossible!"

JERRY left the club and hailed a bus. It was a relief not to have to breathe the same air with Caddington Piermont. He proceeded to find Mrs. Keith Collingwood at the address in West Twenty-fifth Street.

"Quite a far cry from the Vanderbilt to this," he thought, and mounted the steps.

The presiding goddess of the boarding-house was slow in coming, and it was several minutes after Jerry's ring had ceased its clatter before he heard her slippered feet shuffling through the hall.

He employed the interval in speculating as to what kind of a reception he was likely to get. Suppose this Collingwood woman were playing a deep game—might she not have written the letter herself? This opened up such possibilities that for a moment he was lost in a maze. Then he shook his head. What reason could she have for doing such a thing; and why pick on him, Jerry Knox? He dug his stick into the mangy door-mat and reflected that it was a wicked world. He would go a bit slow—impetuosity was his besetting sin.

At this juncture of his reflections the door opened and he found himself confronted by a fat, good-natured woman in a bungalow apron that revealed a startling area of red neck and arms.

He inquired whether Mrs. Collingwood were at home.

The owner of the décolleté costume clucked sympathetically.

"Ain't that too bad. She's just went out with her gentleman friend."

So there was a "gentleman friend." Jerry stiffened.

The woman perceived his chagrin and mistook its origin. She scented a romance. It was not often a boarder in West Twenty-sixth Street could boast two such callers in one morning.

"He took her to lunch—in his own car—to a hotel." This good-looking rival must understand the nature of the competition he was up against.

"I see," said Jerry. "So they went to luncheon, eh? Don't suppose you remember the name of that hotel?"

The woman rubbed a grimy hand through her hair.

"Ad—Admiral. Yes, that's what he said, the Admiral."

Knox looked puzzled.

"The Admiral—that's a new one on me. Sure it wasn't the Commodore?"

She waved away the trifling discrepancy.

"Well, maybe it was. I know it was some place for seafaring men."

Knox left her palpitating with dread for him. She felt in her bones that there was going to be a mix-up and she hoped that the pretty gentleman wouldn't get his face spoiled.

On his second tour of inspection through the Commodore he saw Carter Collingwood seated at a table in the main dining-room. There was a woman with him, and though her back was toward Jerry he sensed that she was young and good-looking.

For a moment he stood irresolute. The head waiter bustled forward, raising a questioning finger. Jerry nodded and walked into the dining-room. By expressing a preference for a seat near a window, he managed to get the table next to Carter's.

His search was ended. The woman at the next table was Enid Collingwood.

BUT what the deuce was she doing with Carter? Cadgy had implied that she was at "outs" with the entire family. Jerry knitted his brows and took up the menu. Under cover of an interest in salads and desserts, he furtively studied the woman. No, she was neither coarse nor stupid. Indeed, she was rather splendidly big and vital—a valkyr—a fit mate for Keith of the Norse brawn and blondness. The crape veil and widow's ruche which had given him the first hint as to her identity spoke eloquently of the tragic ending of their love-story. For Keith's death had been a tragedy to her, he saw that. Her eyes were dark with misery, her shoulders drooped listlessly, and she listened in apathetic silence as Carter talked, making only an occasional comment that sounded almost like a protest.

Knox strained his ears, but caught only tantalizing snatches. He looked about for an excuse to get nearer, but was saved the trouble by a sudden change in the tempo of the conversation. Some remark of Carter's had angered his companion and she answered in an agitated tone:

"You don't have to tell me that you are not like Keith. It speaks in every breath you take. The Collingwood money is the most important thing in the world to you, just as it is to your mother. I do not seem to be able to make either one of you see that I would not touch a penny of it now, after all that has happened. I would die first."

Carter clapped his hands together softly. A sneer twisted his lip.

"Die first," he parodied. "My dear, dying to order isn't so easy. Still, if you're set on it, don't let me stop you."

Jerry's fingers itched to take the offending Carter by the collar. There and then he accepted the trust without reservations. He would help this woman, the wife of his former friend, if it were the last thing he did on earth. But how to go about it? He paused. Enid Collingwood was saying in answer to Carter's gibe:

"You are right when you say that dying is not easy. If it were, I should not be here now." Her voice was filled with a passionate misery that almost lifted Jerry from his chair. "Carter, I tell you I'd welcome any adventure, no matter what it might be, if I thought it would give me a chance to die decently."

It was characteristic of the quixotic Knox that he did not stop to consider consequences as the big idea hit him.

He turned to his waiter.

"Let me look in your eye," he said sternly. "I thought I saw a bit of green in it."

The man laid down the steaming platter. There was a Celtic twinkle in the eyes he presented for inspection.

Knox took a bill from his case.

"I'm willing to wager the whole of this piece of United States currency that your name is Kelly, though you answer to 'Pierre' during rush hours. Am I right?"

The waiter grinned.

"You're wrong, sir. Me real name is Shea and me workin' name is 'Garsong.'"

Jerry held out the five-spot.

"She's yours, Garçon Shea. You're a man after my own heart. I wonder, now, if I could persuade you to undertake a little job for me?"

Five minutes later the still grinning waiter hurried away and Jerry began his neglected luncheon. A certain degree of peace had been restored to the next table. A moment later a page appeared, threading his way among the tables and shrilling in a singsong:

"Mr. Collingwood! Mr. Carter Collingwood!"

Carter pricked up his ears and turned around. The boy drew nearer, caught the look.

"Mr. Collingwood?" he hazarded, and then, "On the telephone, sir, a long-distance call, sir."

Carter, murmuring apologies, rose and followed the boy. As he left the room, Knox stepped over to the next table.

"Mrs. Collingwood," he greeted her, and waited. At the sound of his voice she raised her head, but she did not answer, and he was obliged to plunge into the thick of the situation without further encouragement. "Mrs. Collingwood, I hope you'll pardon me for intruding upon you—I couldn't help overhearing what you said just now, and the thought came to me that I could use you in my business."

Still silence—but the temperature dropped several degrees. Jerry stood his ground.

"I have a proposition for you—something bright and new and snappy—take your breath away." He took out his case and selected a card. "This is an opportunity which comes once in a lifetime. I'm the only one in my particular line." He laid the card before her. "There's my name and address—suppose you drop in this afternoon at—say—three."

Enid was watching him with amazement. Mentally she was trying to classify him. Just what was he—a lunatic—an agent—or a plain flirt?

"Are you trying to annoy me?" she said coldly.

"Oh, I say, do I look that sort? You've got me all wrong. This thing I'm offering you is on the level. It's a straight business proposition." Smiling with disarming frankness, "Why not give me the benefit of the doubt—look into it—satisfy your curiosity."

The firm, well-modeled chin rose an inch or two. "You are making a mistake. I have no curiosity about either you or your business." Deliberately she tore the card across and across and thrust the pieces from her.

Jerry's fingers plowed nervously through his hair. At any moment Carter might return. How could he make her listen to him—how break through her indifference? Desperately he seized upon the first words that entered his head.

"When you made that remark about wanting to die, you were just talking for effect, is that the idea?"

Enid Collingwood gasped. Her eyes blazed with sudden fury.

"I'll be waiting for you at three o'clock," he said, with an air of bravado, retreating. And to himself added; "I hope she doesn't hit me in the back with that chocolate éclair—she's mad enough for almost anything."

He went back to his table, settled his check and took himself off.

"I suppose I've spilled the beans," he thought ruefully. "She'll never let me come within hailing distance again."

LIFE, by the time he had reached the studio, began to assume normal proportions. The walk home, the air and exercise had soothed his nerves. With a sigh of relief he fitted the key into the lock. Here at least was sanctum—no women—no worries. He flung open the door and stopped on the threshold, staring.

In the middle of the room, her black-robed figure sharply silhouetted against the long, gray window, stood—Enid Collingwood.

Knox recovered himself instantly as with elaborate precision he closed the door.

She must have flown here was his first thought. What made her change her mind so suddenly? Aloud he said with exactly the proper shade of solicitude:

"I've kept you waiting. I'm sorry. I was detained. Won't you sit down?"

He dragged forward a chair of dark, carved oak with a crest embroidered on its faded velvet back. Enid thanked him absently, her eyes traveling around the room. It was evident she had not been prepared to find this type of place.

"Perhaps," she began doubtfully, "I have done wrong to come; but I have reached the point——" When she spoke again it was in a flat expressionless tone. "I do not understand how you knew who I was. Why did you offer to help me?

"It was quite simple." Jerry spoke lightly. "I overheard what you said, asked my waiter who you were, he happened to know. That's all there was to it."

His words smoothed the tense frown from her forehead.

"Oh, I'm glad it was only that. I was afraid you were another emissary of the Collingwood family. They have hounded me with offers, advice, insults. Why only to-day—" Her eyes flashed. "Oh, what's the use of talking about it. You, you are a stranger, you do not know any of them, you do not know me, you can have no hidden motive——"

Jerry started. This was a new way of looking at things. He began to feel uncomfortable.

"I might have known," she went on without noticing his embarrassment, "that you were no friend of Carter's when you played that trick on him about the telephone. It was that, really, which brought me here. It was so clever, and Carter was so angry—" She smiled. "I wanted to hear more—to find out about this business—this work you had to offer me." And then with sudden animation, "You said it was unusual—an opportunity in a lifetime. Are you a 'showman?' "

"A 'showman?' " Jerry's laugh was too whole-hearted to give offense. "What gave you that idea?"

"You spoke as though there would be risks. I thought of the circus, looping-the-loop, the dip of death, something that needed a reckless——"

He looked at her pityingly and shook his head. She was so terribly in earnest about throwing her young life away. But he was careful to let no hint of feeling creep into his voice as he said,

"You *were* looking for excitement, weren't you? Well, the circus isn't the only business with a thrill in it. Right offhand I can think of a dozen occupations where a man must gamble with his life every minute. Take this very work of mine for example——"

"Yes," eagerly.

Jerry's eyes twinkled.

"It's new—quite new."

It was evident from the expression of her face that, like a drowning man, she was grasping at the slender thread of this new interest.

He rose and took a few turns up and down the studio. He always thought better on his feet and a cigaret was his panacea for every evil. From the tail of his eye he studied his companion. Already he could see a change in her. He would simply have to keep things moving until she was over the worst of her troubles and then it would be easy enough to explain everything. He flicked his burned-out match stub at the face of a smug green idol squatting on a prayer-rug in the corner, and wheeled about to where Enid Collingwood was sitting.

"I DON'T know just how to explain my business to a layman," he began. "It's so unique, so different, so preposterous that it'll probably sound impossible to you. I am what they call—" a pause, partly for effect and partly to gain time—"a news broker." Up till that moment it had all been something of a muddle even to himself, but once it was out, his ideas clarified with astonishing rapidity.

"I'm the man who guarantees to give the newspapers what they want," he went on. "That's why they call me a news broker. I can run any story to earth—clear up any mystery. I'm called in when everybody else quits the job. Now that you've heard about it, how'd you like to be my assistant? How'd you like to pit your wits against some of these criminals, to go to Mexico and find out why the Terra Nova Oil Company has stopped paying dividends, to hunt down Li Fu Chang the Chinese auto bandit—or perhaps you would prefer to stay nearer home and work on the case of Mrs. Wellington's ruby pendant?"

Enid Collingwood's voice brought him to earth with a bump.

"Which case do you think it would be best for me to try first?"

He stared at her a trifle blankly.

"I wanted to know," she persisted, "which of these cases you would put me on. I am ready to begin at once—right away. I'm so eager to get started. It's a —a million times better than anything I dared hope."

Jerry sat down heavily. He began to see the pit he had digged for himself.

"Of course those are my big cases. They require the skill of a trained operative. I would have to try you out on something simple—something which would give me a chance to see how you work."

"But—" Disappointment brought the shadows back to her eyes.

"Don't get discouraged," he urged hastily. "Your chance will come presently. If you want to work for me, you'll have to be able to stand up against a few knocks downs. Let's get down to business—the matter of salary, contracts and all that sort of red tape. Suppose I start you with—" He reached for his check-book, flattering himself that he had approached a delicate subject with considerable tact.

"Wait!" The tone held a note of warning. "I will not accept money until I have earned it. I admit that I need it; but more than anything else I need something to do—something to occupy my mind—to keep me from going quite mad. I thought from what you said that you wanted some one right away."

JERRY'S hand dropped to his side. Up against it! Either he must produce a case on the spot or confess to the string of lies with which he had been beguiling her. If he confessed now— No, be hanged if he would! He sprang to his feet and commenced again the pacing, his eyes searching the familiar four walls for some suggestion to boost him over this unforeseen barrier. And as usual help came. As he passed his desk he saw a pair of gloves and a note-book. He stopped in his track. What was that yarn Percy Bennet had sprung yesterday? Something about a princess. Stop a bit. He had it now! With a few trimmings it would do as well as any other.

He reached over and picked up the gloves. The feel of them lent substance to the tale.

"Mrs. Collingwood," he said. "Have you ever heard of the lost princess of Marania?"

"The lost Princess of Marania?" She shook her head.

Jerry disposed himself comfortably on one end of the desk, long legs swinging.

"In the first place," he began, "Marania is or rather was, one of the Balkan states. You knew that much, didn't you? Yes? Well, it isn't much to look at on the map—just about fit in Rhode Island with enough left over to plant a border of geraniums around the edges. So—" Jerry took a contemptuous pinch out of the atmosphere to indicate the insignificance of Maranian territory. "But what it lacks in size, it makes up in pep."

"Away back in 18— something or other—there was a treaty called (what the deuce had Percy Bennet called that treaty?—Oh, yes!) called the treaty of San Stephano. That treaty gave Germany a tremendous hold over all the little countries in that section of the world including Marania. The people of Marania didn't take kindly to this state of affairs and they proceeded to raise h—hob. So Germany had to yield a few points. Marania in the end became an independent principality, ruled over by Prince Ferdinand Adolphus and, at the same time, a bone of contention for all the powers of Europe. Nice comfortable situation for the Maranians, you will admit, but they managed to worry along somehow until that affair at Serajevo. Then things began to pop. Every country within arm's length took a hack at them. Prince Ferdinand Adolphus, who seems to have been a pretty good sort of scout in his own way, tried his best to hold things together; but one morning when they started to count noses for the day's work, Prince Ferdy turned up missing. Later on he was found in a tavern on the Post Road, a low sort of place; and a good many things were said about him—the most truthful being that he was dead.

"So much for Prince Ferdinand. But there is one mystery that never has been solved." Knox left his place on the desk and came closer. "On the night of the assassination, what became of the little fourteen-year-old princess, the only child of Prince Ferdinand Adolphus? Did she suffer the same fate as her royal father, or was she smuggled out of the country, and if so—by whom?" He saw that he had her interest at last and hurried on before it had a chance to grow cold. "In the last six months fresh trouble has broken out in the Balkans. Marania once more is menaced by the enemy without and the enemy within. It is rumored that the republic is a failure—the royalist party has come to life. If they had some one to occupy it, the throne would be taken out of the storeroom in a jiffy. In other words, if the Princess Ottilie is alive, now is the time for her to get back. The royalists want to find her, and they're willing to pay a king's ransom to the man who helps them. Now, do you see where I come in?"

Enid Collingwood nodded, too absorbed to speak.

"Suppose," Jerry was watching her

closely. "Suppose I were to tell you that this little princess, who has been missing for the past four years, was here in New York at the present moment?"

Her eyes were wide with excitement. "The city is so big—you might hunt for weeks——"

"No I mightn't. That part's all done. I've located her. She's in the home of—" Jerry hesitated. This mentioning names might be a trifle risky but— He dismissed his qualms with a shrug. It was only another one of Percival Bennet's mare's-nests—there was no truth in it, of course—"in the home of Mr. Willard Edgar, one-time ambassador to Marania."

"What reason have you for thinking so?"

Jerry had anticipated the question. His answer was ready.

"The Edgars are giving a dance to-night—a rather big affair—and the house is closed to newspaper men." He gazed down whimsically at Bennet's gloves which he still held in his hand. "Knowing what I do about Mrs. Edgar, I should say there's some mighty pressing reason for this sudden exclusiveness. The good old U. S. A. isn't anxious to start any international complications by harboring a foreign princess who is wanted in Europe, so the little lady who is visiting the Edgars at the present moment must remain incognito, hard and all as that is on the mistress of the house.

"Now, I'll tell you what I want you to do—" He mapped out a campaign of action. It was so complicated that he might have gone on elaborating indefinitely, but the lengthening shadows warned him that it was growing late. The thing had been pushed far enough for one day. It was the right time to quit. He broke off suddenly. "I guess that's about all—I have an engagement at four, but I'll call you up in the morning and tell you what I have in mind. Your work will be for the most part—shadowing. It's not so bad—keep you out of doors—give you something to think about." He clapped his hands for Tohari and, as the little Japanese bobbed in, fired a volley of orders.

"A taxi for Mrs. Collingwood and charge to my account. Get a move on. Run up to the garage too and get the car." He turned to Enid. "Sorry to have to cut our interview short, but I'll have things a little straightened out by to-morrow and—Oh, by the way, there's that question of money again. I'll give you something for expenses—" He drew out a roll of bills and thrust it into her hands. Then, forestalling a protest. "Don't worry—you'll earn it before you're through."

Which, though he did not realize it, was the first truthful thing Mr. Jared Marshall Knox, Jr., had said that afternoon.

Before Enid could reply, the taxi was announced, and Jerry hustled her out. He saw her to the elevator, came back into the studio, slammed the door, crossed to the desk and fished the paper from its pigeonhole.

For a moment he gazed at its unsullied whiteness, then with a dextrous twist shifted it from the direct sunlight. Nothing happened. He waited—shifted it again. A little cry escaped him. *The paper was blank.*

WHILE Jerry racked his brains over this fresh mystery, Enid Collingwood lay back in the cab and gave herself up to a consideration of the work which had been offered her.

It had not been her intention to commit herself. She marveled at the ease with which the engaging Mr. Knox had beguiled her.

Lost in her thoughts, she had almost forgotten where she was until the taxi with a shrieking of brakes suddenly stopped. She had a confused impression that her driver was swearing and that some one else was shouting, but the words carried no meaning.

She looked out. They were on the East Drive of the park, not far from an entrance. A man was just picking himself up from the roadway in front of the cab. His hat was gone, his stick broken. Enid saw that his bared head was white, but the tall, military figure as it straightened itself suggested neither age nor decrepitude. The face was rugged and not without distinction, yet Enid shivered.

While she watched he took out a handkerchief and began to flick off the dust from his clothes. She was relieved to see that he was apparently unhurt. As he got up out of the roadway, he advanced a pace or two, calling out to some one as he came. Again Enid lost its purport. She realized now, for the first time, that he was speaking in a foreign language—one with which she was not familiar. A cry attracted her attention to the other side of the road. A girl was running across the sloping lawn at her left, closely followed by a self-important young man in a cutaway coat and high silk hat. The elderly man called again in a tone of command. The effect of his words on the girl's pursuer was instantaneous. He increased his speed and caught the fugitive by the arm.

"The ending of a lover's quarrel," Enid reflected and smiled. "Central Park and spring, the old irresistible combination."

But as she watched her heart leaped. No pretty love scene, this, after all. The girl had turned on her captor and was beating him with one small frenzied fist. There was something hateful in the deliberate way in which he ignored her struggles and drew her slowly toward him. Enid half-rose from her seat.

By this time, the old gentleman had crossed the road and was hurrying up the path. The girl—she was little more than a child—turned a tear-stained face as he approached. She was quite beside herself, with fear or rage or both and, making a furious effort, she succeeded in freeing her arm. Then with a gesture eloquent of defiance she gathered her impeding skirt well above her knees, and her slim, brown silk legs were twinkling over the grass at an amazing rate of speed. Her erstwhile captor gave a smothered exclamation and darted after her.

Enid felt her heart thud in unison with the flying feet. She held her breath. What if the girl should trip?

But the fugitive was as light on her feet as a deer. She cleared the low fence at a bound, crossed the road and made straight for the taxi cab. Without waiting for invitation she dragged open the door and sprang for the step. As she did so, the hem of her dress caught in her slipper buckle and she came down head first at Enid's feet.

THERE was no time to consider the ethics of the situation. Without a word the elder woman dragged the girl to a place by her side and slammed the door. The chauffeur threw in the clutch. The car moved forward. Enid cast a swift look behind. The young man was close upon them.

"Hurry, hurry!" she gasped, beating on the glass in a desperate effort to increase the speed.

Already the pursuer was alongside and on the running-board. Instinctively Enid placed a protecting arm about the girl who was cowering face downward in her lap.

The man laughed, a reckless, insolent laugh. His bold dark eyes traveled over Enid with a frank stare of admiration. She shrank as from a caress and with fascinated eyes she watched his fingers fumbling with the catch on the door.

At this point, the chauffeur discovered that he had one passenger too many. His method was simple and direct: He reached back one hairy paw and swept the offender into the roadway. The car gained in speed. They turned out of the park and into the avenue.

Enid looked down at the girl. Not once since her spectacular advent had she moved. Enid passed a hand over the bowed shoulders and was pleased when she felt a little quiver run through them. Tears, she knew, would be a relief. The little fugitive had had a narrow escape—but from what? Was this one of those terrible cases that appeared almost daily in the newspapers. Would it, but for her intervention, have ended in a mysterious disappearance, a tragedy?

"Who are you, and what can I do to help you?" she said at last, scarcely knowing how to begin.

Slowly the girl raised her head. Enid found herself looking into a pair of black-lashed, topaz eyes with a fascinating suggestion of the Orient in the angle at which they slanted over the high cheek-bones. For a full minute she gazed into their yellow depths and then—shrank back with a cry of surprise and indignation.

The girl was laughing.

To Enid Collingwood the discovery was like a slap in the face. The adventure was, after all, nothing but a schoolgirl escapade. She had been duped.

From the opposite corner of the cab came a stifled giggle, and a hand crept out and tugged at her sleeve.

"Don't get angry," the owner of the hand pleaded. The soft voice blurred the words with a throaty little accent.

Enid turned and surveyed her companion curiously. It was impossible to harden her heart against so pretty a penitent. Yet after all *was* the girl as ingenuous as she was trying to appear?

Small and compactly molded, her blond

curly hair crisply bobbed over her ears, at first glance she looked as immature as a bisque doll; but in her queer, almond-shaped eyes with their flecks of green and jet there lurked an expression as sophisticated as her costume.

"I confess I'm a bit dense," Enid said at last. "I don't quite see the point of the joke. Perhaps you'll be good enough to explain. You were only pretending to be afraid of that man. Is that the idea?"

"Afraid of what man?" And then with a scornful sniff, "Oh, you mean Karl." She spread out the palms of her hands and raised her shoulders but all she said was, "No, I'm not afraid of Karl. Only sometimes when he pretends he is going to kiss me, I—" She broke off only to add darkly, "He'd better not try. I'd scratch his eyes out!"

She looked quite capable of putting the threat into execution. Enid knitted her brows and made another effort to understand the situation.

"Was the old gentleman your grandfather?"

"My grandfather?" The girl had a funny trick of twisting a question out of every question. "No, he's my Uncle Waldemar. I have no grandfather, nor father, nor mother nor—anybody. Just Uncle Wallie and Karl. And I *hate* them." Her firm white teeth came together with a vicious snap. "I hate them both. I hate their monocles and their sticks and their everlasting top hats."

The outburst made Enid smile. This was no woman. This was a child, and a badly spoiled child at that. She spoke reprovingly.

"You mustn't talk so. Sensible human beings don't feel that way."

The girl stole a sidelong glance from under her lashes. Her short upper lip puckered itself into a pout.

"I'm not sensible and I'm not a human being."

Enid waited. After a moment spent in kicking the toe of her slipper against the foot-rest, the young lady condescended to explain.

"Look there!" A wave of her hand indicated the people thronging the avenue. "*They* are human beings. They go where they like, eat what they like, say what they like. They have families, friends, lovers. While I—I am only a puppet, a little doll strung on wires. I can't move until some one pulls the string."

There was a certain pathos in the wistful tone, in the droop of the young shoulders. Despite herself Enid was touched; but she had been tricked before. Experience made her cautious.

"Why was this Karl, as you call him, chasing you in the park?" she asked.

Again that shrug of the shoulders.

"Because I was running away."

It was the obvious answer and apparently not intended to be rude. Enid let it pass.

"Why running away?"

The girl stirred uneasily. The catechism was making her restless. She hesitated the fraction of a second before replying.

"A darling air-man, with two wound stripes and the cutest mustache promised to make a landing on the Mall this afternoon at four o'clock on purpose to pick me up."

THE explanation was glib enough, just a trifle too glib. The girl was lying; but to what purpose?

Enid Collingwood was not a subtle person. Her thoughts were mirrored in her face, and the yellow eyes studying her from under narrowed lids were quick to read and interpret them.

"It does sound like a fairy-tale, doesn't it?" asked the girl coolly. "But you wouldn't have thought so if you could have heard Uncle Wallie. He was ready to kill me." Her brow darkened with sudden fury. "Karl told on me, the pig!"

One thing was certain. There could be no mistaking the genuineness of her feelings toward Karl. But the absurdity of the airplane story still rankled with Enid.

"If that was really what was on foot," she could not help saying, "it is a good thing it was found out. You might have been killed."

"Killed!" A little disgusted moue. "Nobody would care. I wouldn't care myself. I'd just as soon die to-morrow if I could have a good time doing it."

"You mustn't say that." In shocked protest.

"Why mustn't I? I'm sick of life—my life. I'd be glad of any adventure that would give me a chance to die the right way."

Enid Collingwood started. The words had a familiar ring. A wave of color dyed her cheeks. Could it be possible that only a few hours had elapsed since her luncheon with Carter, since the red-headed young man had challenged her for saying the same thing?

The recollection of her own unhappiness bred a larger sympathy. She tried to put it into words; but even as she talked she felt that the girl was not listening—that her truant thoughts were racing far afield, busy no doubt with plans for some fresh mischief. Vaguely discomforted, she lost the thread of her discourse—hesitated—stopped.

"Why don't you tell me more about yourself," she finished lamely.

Something in the tone, rather than the words roused the girl from her reverie. She turned impulsively and caught Enid's hands in a strong, warm clasp.

"Please, please don't ask me any more questions. I can't tell you a thing about myself. If I did, you would hate me. I do all sorts of horrid things—things that I don't want to do. I am not like the people you know," then with a little catch in her voice, "and I'm awfully unhappy."

As she spoke, the cab jerked to a stop.

The girl leaned forward and opened the door. With a quick, bird-like movement she thrust out her head, steadying herself by her finger-tips. For a moment she poised thus uncertainly on the edge of the seat, then with lightning suddenness she whirled about.

Enid was quite unprepared for the sudden embrace. A pair of strong young arms caught her close and squeezed the breath out of her lungs in a startled kiss. It was the caress of a grizzly. Even the kiss which accompanied it was more than half bite. She disengaged herself with a protest, raising a hand to her disheveled head. Her hat and veil were all awry. With groping fingers she sought to repair the damage. When she looked up again she was alone. Her companion had vanished completely. As she had come, so had she gone without a by-your-leave or explanation. The whole adventure might have been a dream except for a faint reminiscent odor of some perfume as elusive and tantalizing as the girl herself.

Enid's first feeling was one of regret. She would have liked to win the confidence of this rebellious child with the woman's eyes —to solve the riddle of her extraordinary behavior. What was she? Who were the two men; what hold did they have over her? Why had she told that story about the airplane? And why was she unhappy? Why hadn't she— With a little disgusted grimace she acknowledged the futility of her speculation. It was too late to think of these things now.

Too late! She jumped, galvanized by a sudden idea. Why was it too late? There was Jared Knox, the man whose business in life it was to solve mysteries!

Enid clasped and unclasped her hands ecstatically. At last she had found congenial work to do, she could accept Knox's money without compunction, she would earn it, she— At the thought of the money her mind traveled to her hand-bag and its precious contents. What had she done with it? Hastily she felt on the seat. She shook out her skirts. She got down and groped about the floor.

A trifle dazed, she sat back and tried to think. Yes, she recalled having the bag in the cab. In that case it must still be in the cab. Another frantic search with no results. Could it have dropped out? Perhaps when the girl got out— The girl! Suspicion reared its head. The story about the airplane, the threats against Karl, the good-by hug—all tricks to distract her attention. Suspicion became a certainty. How gullible she had been! No wonder the girl had laughed. Imperiously she tapped on the glass. The cab drew over to the curb and stopped. She poured her troubles into the sympathetic ear of the chauffeur.

He agreed in damning the girl but the only remedy he could suggest was a trip to the nearest police station At first Enid demurred. She had not contemplated so radical a step. Finally, however, she permitted herself to be overruled and the man climbed back into his place and started the car. The ride came to an end in a dingy by-street filled with children and push-carts. There he left her.

IT WAS the first time Enid Collingwood had ever visited a police station. She felt nervous and self-conscious as she opened the door.

The pleasant-faced man in uniform behind the desk looked up as she approached and smiled. She made rather a poor job of her story but she managed somehow.

The man listened without comment. When she had finished he touched a bell on his desk.

A man in plain clothes bustled in, his small round eyes traveled from the lieutenant to Enid and back again. The lieutenant answered the unspoken question in two crisp sentences.

"The Montressor gang has reached New York. They've begun operations."

The man made a whistling noise with his lips.

"Is that straight?" he said. "How'd you get the dope, chief?"

"Tell Detective Pheeny what you've just told me," the chief requested.

Wonderingly she obeyed. Both men leaned toward her, ears strained, eyes snapping. They were like two hounds picking up a warm trail. She began to wish she had not come.

"This girl, now," Pheeny urged. "What was she like?"

As Enid described her late companion she found to her surprise that much of her resentment had disappeared. What would these men do to the girl, she wondered. She wanted her bag and her money, of course, but— Pheeny was speaking again.

"That'll be the 'Princess' I take it, chief. What d'ye think?"

At the word "Princess," she started. Another princess? What was the matter with every one to-day? First Mr. Knox and now Detective Pheeny. Timidly she sought to glean more information.

"She ain't a real princess, of course. Just a slick little female 'con' man—one of a gang of foreigners come to take a crack at this country."

"I don't know what to think," admitted the lieutenant doubtfully. "This bag-snatching don't seem quite in the line of what we've been led to expect from her. I thought she went in more for blackmail and that sort of thing."

"Sooner or later they all make their mistake." Pheeny, thumbs in the armholes of his vest, teetered compacently back and forth on a pair of fallen arches. "And believe me, chief, this mistake is going to cost her something. With a first-hand description like we got now to go on, I'll have that little lady under lock and key in the next twenty-four hours, or my name ain't James Aloysius Pheeny."

Inside of twenty-four hours—before the hands of the clock had traveled twice around its dial—the girl would be a prisoner—shut into a jail, away from the light and sunshine of which she seemed so much a part. Pheeny had said it, and Pheeny represented the long arm of the law which stops at nothing. The woman who had invoked the aid of that arm, shivered.

"Is that all you know?" It was the chief speaking.

"Yes."

THE loss of her bag and money brought the realization that she must walk home. She made a grimace and quickened her pace.

A few blocks down the avenue a shop-window attracted her eye. She paused. Behind her a door opened. A large, over-dressed woman herded three girls toward a waiting limousine. Two of the girls, lanky, giggling misses in their early teens, hung back reluctantly. The third, a slim young thing in brown, her head bowed, hurried to the curb. She dragged open the door of the limousine and flung herself inside. Something in the precipitate action attracted Enid's attention. As the car moved off, she sprang forward.

A face was pressed against the glass, a pitiful, distracted face, fighting between tears and fury. In that fleeting glimpse she recognized her companion of the park—the girl she had just denounced to the police.

Turning, Enid found the doorman of the shop standing at her elbow, a broad grin on his black, good-natured face.

"Who were those people?" she demanded eagerly.

"You means dat large pusson what was readin' de riot act?" He chuckled. "Dat was Mis' Edgar—Mis' Willard Edgar, ma'am."

The lights in the windows blinked crazily. Heedless of the traffic, she navigated the crossing.

It was in the Edgar house that Jared Knox hoped to find the lost princess of Marania, but here was the little thief of the taxicab—Pheeny's princess of the underworld—with Mrs. Edgar. Could it be possible?

The full significance of the scene burst upon her: The two princesses were one and the same!

Did Mr. Jared Marshall Knox, Jr., know

the dual personality of the girl? Would he be angry when he found out that the police were on the trail too? Why had she not gone to him with the story of the lost bag. Goaded by her misgivings she hurried on. She never knew how she reached Twenty-Fifth Street, but at last she found herself climbing the steps of her boarding-house. One thought was uppermost: she must get in touch with Mr. Knox at once.

Her lack of money remedied, Enid Collingwood ran down the steps of the boarding-house and turned toward the avenue in search of a telephone.

No, Mr. Knox was not at home, Tohari answered. Yes, a dinner engagement. Tohari did not know the name of the people with whom his master was dining. Enid clung to hope. What time did he expect Mr. Knox to return? The hope was dashed. Tohari was positive his master would not be back before midnight. There was usually a theatre or a dance following the dinner.

Enid gripped the receiver. Midnight would be too late. The princess would be in jail by that time. Pheeny had said twenty-four hours, but the chances were that he would do it in less. She must warn the girl—but how? She did not even know her name. She could scarcely call up the Edgar house and say, "Please ask the princess to step to the phone." Nor by the same token could she send her a message. What a stupid mess it all was. There was only one thing to do—she must go herself.

The thought of storming the Edgar portals was a terrifying one. What excuse could she make?—how guard against failure, especially on a night when the entire household would probably be in a state of upheaval with preparations for the dance?

The Dance! ! ! !

She fairly hurled herself upon the transmitter.

"Hello, hello! Are you there?"

Yes, Tohari was still there. He would, weather and central permitting, have been there till Doomsday if so required. His unruffled calm steadied her. She gave her directions clearly and distinctly. She repeated them. Their simplicity astonished her. Nothing could astonish Tohari. She hung up the receiver, satisfied.

THE residence of Mr. Willard Edgar, one-time minister to Marania, was ablaze with lights. Softly moving cars purred in a steady stream up to the entrance, left rustling cargoes of human freight and purred away again. Just as the press of vehicles was greatest, a parti-colored taxicab maneuvered its way into the line. When it rattled off once more, Enid Collingwood was standing in the patch of yellow light on the open threshold of the great house.

The magnificence of everything appalled her—she longed to cut and run; but it was too late. Already she was an object of attention. Several couples had been obliged to elbow their way past her—one woman raised an inquiring gold lorgnette. She stepped forward.

To her dismay, the footman said at once, "What name, please?"

His tone was loud and clear. In his hand he held a slip of paper. Why had she been such a fool; she might have known there would be a list of the guests. She lost her head completely—and by so doing saved it.

"I—I—" she stammered, "I am not a guest. I am—" She stopped, startled. Dawson's forbidding countenance was illuminated by the light of understanding. The frown became a smirk.

"I see. You're the young person we engaged to sing." Supercilious tolerance oozed from every word. "Higgins will take care of you, m'dear. Hi there, Higgins!" as another man in livery appeared, "look to the young lady and show her where to put her wraps." He turned to the next arrival.

With burning cheeks, Enid followed her guide. As a guest she had not passed muster—as an entertainer, she was barely tolerated—what might she hope to expect if they discovered she was neither the one nor the other? Meekly she went on to a flight of steps in the regions beyond the main hall.

Once on the floor above, her courage returned. In the wake of Higgins she threaded bewildering corridors that led at last to a cozy little sitting-room. Here the flunkey left her, promising to return when her services should be required.

She tore off her cloak and scarf, ran to the door, opened it and listened. Not a sound. For all she heard of them, the dancing merrymakers in the great ballroom might have been miles away. She began to appreciate the vastness of the establishment in which she found herself. Surely it would not be so difficult to avoid detection for a time at least. But she must keep her head. The most difficult part of her task lay before her. The princess was yet to be found.

She stepped into the hall and once more waited, listening. At any moment Higgins might return, her imposture would be discovered and she herself turned into the street.

She walked the length of the corridor. Another turn brought her into the wide foyer that gave on the main staircase. Here, in an archway overlooking the red-carpeted steps, she paused and gazed down on the scene below.

The warm air that rose to her level was heavy with mingled perfumes and the scent of wilting roses—a sensuous waltz throbbed plaintively from the ballroom—groups of people moved constantly to and fro.

As she watched, a man entered the archway. She cast a nervous, sidelong glance at him, but he seemed quite unconscious of her presence. He, too, was absorbed in the human kaleidoscope of color below them. She had a momentary feeling that she had seen him before; but where, she could not say. He was unusually short, scarcely higher than her own shoulder, middle-aged, flat-chested. His face had a comic, almost pathetic dignity. One hand tugged at his ragged mustache, the other rested on the rail of the little balcony. All at once he sighed, a deep, soul-weary sigh, and turned away.

To Enid Collingwood that sigh, like the shifting of a slide in a spot-light, cast a different color over everything. The gaiety became too gay, the laughter too high in key, the air too heavy. She had a feeling of suffocation—a prescience of impending evil. A hand, light as a wind-blown leaf, touched her arm. With difficulty suppressing a cry, she whirled about.

The princess stood beside her.

"I saw you from the floor below," she said. "I could scarcely believe my eyes. I did not dream you were to be here tonight."

With chin uplifted, a smile curving the corners of her mouth, she waited for a reply.

Enid's one thought in coming had been to find this girl and warn her of her danger; but now that the culprit stood before her in the flesh, saucy, unrepentant, hot resentment rose within her and blotted out the generous impulse. She remembered only her lost bag and the manner in which she had been tricked.

"I had no intention of coming until—until you took my bag this afternoon."

The girl laughed.

"I suppose you're joking," she said, tucking her arm through the older woman's. "Come on down-stairs. I'll introduce you to a lot of awfully funny people."

ENID caught a mocking gleam in the queer, yellow eyes. Indignantly she withdrew her arm.

"I am not joking. The loss of that bag meant a great deal to me. I want you to give it back."

The eyes widened, then contracted sharply. The girl stamped her foot.

"I tell you I have not seen your bag."

Enid shook her head.

"I have been to the police," she said simply. "They know who you are. They are coming to arrest you. If you do not give back the bag——"

Her wrist was caught. Those slim fingers could grip like steel.

"Know who I am? What do you mean?"

"They know you are the 'princess' and——"

"Stop!" It was a command. The girl looked hurriedly about her. The upper hall was, for the moment, deserted. They were alone. "Don't say any more—don't speak. If any one in this house knew—if they suspected—" She stopped, biting her lip and then, "You can't stay here, that's certain. You must go at once."

"Why?"

"Because every minute you lose makes your chance of escape so much less."

"But why should I want to escape? I have done nothing wrong."

The girl shook her head impatiently.

"I can not talk to you here. Come!"

Swiftly she led the way back, through the maze of corridors to a back staircase. In silence they descended to the floor below.

Here the girl paused. She peered this way and that, one small fist clinched against her breast. For generations her ancestors had kept their heads on their shoulders only by the grace of God and the exercise of crafty wits. Satisfied that the coast was clear she moved forward again, hugging the wall. Enid followed.

They came at last to a door, its dark oak panels almost hidden in the wainscoting of the hall. No one but themselves had invaded the solitude of the west wing. The girl opened the door an inch or two and put her eye to the crack—widened the aperture and made a little, significant gesture. Together they crossed the threshold.

"This is Mr. Edgar's study," announced the princess. "No one ever comes here—we can talk freely."

She seemed all at once to have grown immeasurably older. Her mouth was drawn, her lips colorless. To Enid Collingwood the change was welcome. It made the girl seem more human—not quite so heartless. She longed to solve the mystery that enveloped her, to hold out her arms and make a bid for unstinted confidence. Instead, she found herself suddenly and inexplicably pouring out the story of her own unhappiness, the meeting with Jerry Knox, its outcome and her subsequent visit to the police.

The girl listened without comment. Now and then a peculiar expression flitted across her face. At the end she asked abruptly.

"Is that all?" Enid nodded.

"Good! At least I know where I stand." And then with a businesslike brusquerie, "You will be safe here until I return to fetch you. I will——"

"But," Enid protested, "you have not told me yet what it is *I* have to fear."

The girl hesitated, then laid her two hands on her companion's shoulders and looked deep into her eyes.

"You are an American," she said slowly. "It is difficult to make you understand; but in my country a person who stumbles, no matter how accidentally upon a political secret, knows that he has signed his death warrant. If the Duke Waldemar thought that you might interfere with his plans, he would brush you out of existence with as little compunction as though you were a fly."

Enid Collingwood tried to laugh, but her nerves were tingling.

"If this uncle of yours is such a monster, why do you stay with him? Let us leave the house together. You can tell your story to Mr. Knox and he——"

The girl drew herself up haughtily.

"I am the Princess Ottilie of Marania—I do not betray my own people." She took a few restless steps back and forth, her fingers locked in hysterical tension. "This afternoon when you first saw me, I was trying to get away. I felt that I could not stand things any longer. I wanted to escape, but I had no one to turn to. You dropped from the sky in answer to a prayer. I will admit now it was I who took your bag. With money in my pocket I hoped to find a temporary refuge but—Mrs. Edgar met me and dragged me back." She seemed in some odd way to be seeking to justify herself in her own eyes as she went on.

"I'M sure I'm not to blame for all this—I have almost forgotten how to be good. When I was twelve years old my father was assassinated—stabbed in the back by a paid *coupe-jarret*, the sort of a fellow one can hire at any crossroad for a bottle of wine. The murderer, I bear him no grudge, was cut down; but the man who lured my father into the ambuscade escaped. In the middle of the night my uncle Waldemar came and dragged me from my bed. He bade me dress, and while I dressed he told me. I remember it all so well—" her voice grew wistful— "the candle on the stand by the bed, that threw great, black shadows on the walls—the gleaming cross of Saint Michael on my uncle's breast— I wanted to scream, but I was a princess and the daughter of a brave man. We left the palace by a secret passage and Uncle Wallie and another man rode with me away from the city of Bresnia, through the flat country by the river Ula until we came to the frontier.

"For the next three years I lived in a Franciscan convent in the north of Italy. But one day my uncle arrived, and told me that the time had come to avenge my father's death. I did not want to leave the convent and the sisters who had been so good to me, but—" She shrugged her shoulders. "My life since then has been lived in the hell-pits of Europe, without a country, without a name—my companions such riffraff as Karl and his friends. Then came—America. We have been here six weeks. The Duke Waldemar does not take women into his confidence; but I understand that the hour is at hand—the man who betrayed my father has been run to earth. Inside of twenty-four hours—" She broke off abruptly. "You see now why I can not betray him—why— But you, you must go. You must not be mixed up in this affair. I will help you. Be patient a little longer. I go now to make plans for your escape."

Half-way to the door, Enid checked her.

"But suppose some one comes while you are gone?"

The Princess Ottile paused, her brows puckered in a frown.

"It's a chance we must take. Wait, I have it!" She pointed to the velvet hangings at the bay window. "Hide yourself behind those curtains." With a characteristic, bird-like movement she swooped down upon the reluctant Enid and half led, half dragged her to the place of concealment.

Standing off to view the effect, she impressed a last warning.

"Remember, you are not to leave until I come. Don't play the Cinderella act the minute my back is turned."

Enid laughed. "If I do, I shall leave my slipper behind." She thrust one gray velvet foot through the folds of the curtain and waggled it vigorously.

The princess regarded the foot with interest. "All right," she cried, "that's a bargain. Now I'm going." But at the door she turned again and gave another look. In her eyes there was an expression of something very like triumph. Her anxious frown relaxed—she smiled. The next instant she was gone.

ENID COLLINGWOOD spent the next half-hour reflecting. Now that the spell of the girl's presence had been removed she did not take quite so much stock in the heroics about Uncle Waldemar and his mysterious plans. She remembered with uncomfortable exactness Detective Pheeny's summary of the princess—"a slick little female con-man." After all, the girl had said nothing to disprove it. She had even admitted the bag and the money.

Another half-hour. The curtained recess became a prison.

She had just about decided to go when the door opened and some one entered the room. From the clinking of glasses, she took it to be one of the servants—Higgins without doubt. Her heart went down with a flop. To go out boldly was one thing, to be caught skulking another. She started to her feet; but before she had had an opportunity to disclose her presence the door opened once more. Evidently others besides herself and Higgins had business in the study that night.

One of the newcomers crossed her angle of vision. The profile glimpse of his Punchinello nose and overhanging brows told her that she had not benefited by the interruption. It was the Duke Waldemar. Enid had an hysterical desire to laugh, but the voice of the other man brought her back to the perils of her position. It was high and querulous, but it carried the note of authority.

"That will do, Higgins."

"Very well, Mr. Edgar."

Mr. Edgar! The master of the house! Enid felt that she would give all she possessed to be able to escape the humiliation of discovery now.

As the footman closed the door behind him, a chair creaked heavily. One of the two men had settled himself. Enid sighed. This was likely to be a long business. She ventured a peep between the curtains. The duke was pacing the floor—it was Mr. Edgar who occupied the chair. To her astonishment, she recognized the sallow face and comic side-whiskers of the man who for a few brief moments had stood beside her in the alcove on the floor above. So this was the former ambassador to Marania, the man who had occupied the center of the political stage on more than one occasion. She had about resigned herself to the situation when Mr. Edgar spoke up sharply and in English.

"All of what you say may be true, Hexinore; but, whether or not this girl is the Princess Ottilie, I repeat I have absolutely no intention of financing a revolution in Marania in order to place her upon the throne."

From the expression on the duke's face it was evident that he could undertand English even if he did not choose to speak it. The disagreeable old nose hooked farther over the red lips, the eyes snapped. His reply was long and emphatic. Mr. Edgar stopped him at last by a blow on the table that set the glasses and decanters to jingling.

"Don't try to threaten me—it won't work. Marania is a long way off, and even if it were not, that affair is ancient history. Too much has happened in the meantime. I will be glad to advance a little money for this girl's education or present needs, whatever they may be; but I will not be bled."

The duke resumed his measured pacing of

the floor. Presently he wheeled about and snapped a question. The little ambassador, quite unmoved, regarded him fixedly before answering.

"In this country we have a name for that sort of thing. We call it blackmail. If I should give a hint to the proper authorities, you would find yourself jailed before morning. You ought to know better, Hexinore, than to try to play me for a fool. Name a resasonable sum and— What's that?" as the duke snarled some half-audible retort. "For God's sake, speak English."

The tall old nobleman seemed to take a fresh grip on his temper. To Enid's surprise, he smiled. Drawing up the chair nearest to Mr. Edgar's he parted his coat tails with elaborate precision and sat down. His next remark was couched in English which, though slow and a trifle hesitating, would have put a good many Americans to the blush.

"You will pardon me," he said, "for forgetting that Marania and all its works has become distasteful to you. It is, I am sure, quite natural under the circumstances. The blunder is mine." He reached out a lean, aristocratic hand and helped himself liberally to the port. "My little country is, as you have so aptly reminded me, far away." And then jocularly raising his glass, "Here's to our sins—may they all be as far away as my country!"

Mr. Edgar ignored the toast, and the duke, having drained his glass, remarked:

"Oh, by the way, I met a friend of yours yesterday."

"A friend of mine?" The question was perfunctory.

His companion settled himself comfortably in the deep chair and eyed his host with the expectant air of a hungry cat that has just succeeded in decoying a sparrow from the safety of a telegraph wire. The little man stirred uneasily.

"Well, who was it?" he asked at last.

The duke roused himself as from a reverie. "Eh?—Oh, yes, of course—the name of the man. Quite so, quite so." He seemed about to drift off again, but bethought himself and added: "It was—Bambi. Ah," as Mr. Edgar started, "I thought that would surprise you. Yes, Bambi. None other. Your faithful servant, Bambi."

His host interrupted him incredulously. "Bambi—in New York?"

The smile on the other man's face grew more pronounced.

"No wonder you can't believe it. After you had told me that Bambi had gone back to die in his native India, it *was* something of a shock to meet him right here in the city. He was surprised too—as surprised as I, but not as pleased. To be perfectly candid, I think he was afraid that I should tell you I had seen him. It took time to convince him that I was to be trusted." The duke thoughtfully stroked one bushy eyebrow with his forefinger.

"I had to use all my powers of persuasion—I even had to admit a fondness for crystal-gazing. I think I omitted to mention that Bambi goes in for the crystal sphere. Perhaps you knew it already. No?" as Mr. Edgar muttered something that was unintelligible to Enid. "Well, he does. Yesterday I looked in on an old friend of mine, one Zadurian, a worker in magic—it was there I found Bambi. He let me join him in his séance. We consulted the sphere and I chose to peep into the past. It is easy for me to look into—the past."

THE Duke Waldermar paused. For a moment there was not a sound in the room—not even the ticking of a clock to break the tense stillness. At last he took up the thread of his narrative.

"Strangely enough, I saw a bit of the past in which I am most interested; a night in Marania, five years ago. Perhaps you, too, can recall it. You were, unless my memory fails me, American ambassador to my country at that time and chosen friend of my brother-in-law, the Prince Ferdinand Adolphus. On the night in question my kinsman went alone and unattended to a certain inn known as La Bonne Chance to meet one in whom he had perfect confidence and met instead—his death."

If the duke had expected a show of emotion on the part of the man sitting opposite to him, he was disappointed. The little ambassador continued to sit, his chin resting upon his chest, to all outward appearances unmoved. Even his fingers, the tips of which he had placed together with mathematical exactness, gave no sign of trembling. He spoke now sneeringly.

"You did it better in your own tongue, Hexinore, and without the stage properties; but you always did love to play to the gallery. Have you quite finished? Because if you have I must return to my other guests."

The man addressed as Hexinore raised his head. A grudging admiration flickered in his restless eyes.

"The next," he said, "may prove more interesting. It introduces a new character—the one person who came to the assistance of Prince Ferdinand when the assassin's hand was raised against him. Ah—I see I have your attention at last," for Willard Edgar had started upright in his chair as though stung by a lash. "Yes, Bambi was good enough to assist my crystal-gazing—he provided a bit that I had never known before—showed me——"

"Stop!" The little ambassador was on his feet. "What do you hope to gain by all this? Is it only money you are after or——"

The next was lost to the eavesdropper behind the curtains; for the duke in a sudden fit of frenzy lapsed into his native tongue. But whatever it was, it had a tremendous effect on the other man. Slowly, as though the strength had gone out of them, his legs swayed beneath him and he sank, a crumpled heap into the great chair.

The foreigner was pitiless. He towered over him, gloating, ready to push his advantage to its full limit.

"Now will you help me to place the girl Ottilie on the throne of Marania?" he demanded. "Or shall I tell her, and the whole world besides, that the man who *tried* to save her father is a prisoner at Bellaires—a prisoner whose name is——"

The door flew open with a bang. The Princess Ottilie stood on the threshold accompanied by a young man carrying a tray of goodies.

"Oh," gasped the girl, "whoever would have thought to find you two conspiring here?" Her tone was playful, but Enid felt sure that the yellow eyes had sought the curtain behind which she was hiding.

"Ottilie!" The duke said something in their own tongue. The princess followed suit and for a moment they sparred irritably. Now and then she emphasized some remark with a stamp of her small gold slipper.

A movement on the part of Mr. Edgar distracted the duke; he turned his head. Instantly the girl changed her tactics. From defying, she tried wheedling; and with some success; for her uncle appeared to yield with reservations. She asked the young man to put the tray on the table and began to back slowly away, shaking her finger to emphasize her parting remark.

"Remember what you promised—that we might have the room to ourselves in ten minutes." She raised her voice. "I shall be back."

The woman behind the curtain knew that this last was meant for her ears alone. It was a message of comfort and good cheer; but her heart sank as she heard the door close.

The duke stood for several seconds without moving or speaking, then he turned and approached the spot where Mr. Edgar was sitting. His head was bowed, his brows knitted in a heavy frown.

"Damn!" he said savagely.

His host rose. He was plainly relieved at the turn affairs had taken.

"There is no use getting angry at the antics of that child," he said. "I am sure she did not think——"

"Not think?" The duke worried at the ends of his short mustache. "I should think by this time you of all people, would begin to realize that the Princess Ottilie never does *anything* without thinking."

HE STUDIED the tray in moody preoccupation, then he raised his head and let his glance travel around the room. Slowly his eyes swept the wall, the window, the bookshelves. At last they returned to the window and rested there. He smiled, his upper lip drawing back at one corner till the long, discolored teeth were bare.

"Step out from behind those curtains," he commanded.

It seemed to Enid Collingwood that the beating of her own heart must have betrayed her hiding-place, so suffocatingly did it pound against her ribs. She had no thought of disobeying the order. With lagging steps she left the shelter of the window-seat, her hands stretched out to ward off the danger she felt enveloping her. As she appeared between the heavy velvet draperies, both men uttered the same cry.

"A woman!"

And then the duke added, "A spy, eh?" and started forward with upraised threatening fist. Instantly Willard Edgar intervened, his tone suave, conciliatory.

"My dear young lady, why are you hiding there? Why are you not among the other guests?"

She moistened her dry lips, but her wits also were parched. "Because I am not a guest," she mumbled. "I——"

Instantly she saw her mistake. The two men drew closer.

"Who are you, then?" It was the duke who put the question. In desperation Enid resolved to tell the truth. With what dignity remained to her, she drew herself up to her full height.

"I am Mrs. Keith Collingwood," she answered simply.

Scarcely had the words left her lips when, with a cry, both men flung themselves upon her.

SHORTLY before two o'clock in the morning Jerry Knox returned to his studio apartment, laboring with a sense of responsibility in the person of the younger brother of a girl who had once promised to be a sister to him.

Having with the help of the elevator boy twice throttled a burst of song, he flung the would-be tenor into a chair and turned to Tohari.

"Help me put that fool into bed and then hop it around to the garage with the car."

The sleepy-eyed Tohari obediently thrust his hands under the arms of the prostrate guest and lifted him into a sitting position.

"Lady call up," he observed solemnly.

"What lady?" demanded Jerry, stooping for his end of the burden.

The little Japanese shook his head.

Knox hoisted the limp feet off the floor.

"You don't happen to know what she wanted or any other trifling detail that might interest me, do you?"

The sarcasm acted as a sudden spur. The result was a version of Enid Collingwood's message that would have astonished that young woman almost as much as it did the person for whom it was intended.

The feet dropped back to the floor with a bang. Knox stared blankly at the bland countenance before him.

"Are you *sure* that's what she said?"

Tohari nodded.

"And she wants me to call for her at the Edgar house to-night?"

The nodding grew vehement.

"Good Lord! What in the name of common sense has she been and gone and done?"

This being quite beyond Tohari, he merely kept on nodding like a toy mandarin.

"For Heaven's sake stop that!" commanded his master. And then, snatching out his watch: "Why didn't you tell me all this as soon as I came in? Here," indicating the now peacefully slumbering guest, "you'll have to put him to bed by yourself—What's that?—oh, any bed—my bed—I can sleep on the couch—provided I'm not sent to jail for the rest of the night."

The word "jail" had a stimulating effect upon the memory of the little Japanese. He commenced to jabber eagerly, but it was too late. The front door had slammed with a jarring crash.

As the raspberry-colored car tore through Central Park, Jerry Knox voiced to the night wind the woes of a guilty conscience.

"Why in time did I ever mix up with this Collingwood woman?" was the question he asked himself over and over. "I never thought she'd take that yarn of mine so seriously. If she goes pussy-footing around town telling everybody that she's looking for a lost princess, she'll land in the psychopathic ward in Bellevue sure as shooting. I wonder what she's been up to all evening and what she meant by telling Tohari that she'd made a terrible blunder."

It seemed an eternity before he reached the Edgar house, though as a matter of fact he made the trip in something less than fifteen minutes.

He ran up the steps. Many of the guests had already gone, but the ballroom was still well filled. Jerry scanned the faces of those about him and then turned to a man in livery.

"Can you tell me where I can find Mrs. Collingwood?" he inquired.

The man—it chanced to be Dawson—was sorry, but Mrs. Collingwood had not been there that evening. He supposed the gentleman referred to Mrs. Lansing Collingwood.

No, the gentleman did not refer to Mrs. Lansing Collingwood. It was the younger Mrs. Collingwood he was looking for.

Dawson raised a supercilious eyebrow. By that simple gesture he managed to convey the impression that he had never heard of such a person as the younger Mrs. Collingwood.

Jerry made another effort.

"Maybe you didn't get the name; but don't you recall seeing a large handsome girl, smooth dark hair, blue eyes, dressed—" He visualized Enid Collingwood as he had last seen her—"dressed all in black?"

The butler pondered heavily and shook his head. He was sure he would have remembered such a person, but suggested that the gentleman take a peep into the ballroom and satisfy himself.

Jerry took the peep. There was no one who even remotely resembled the object of his search. With a frown, he thanked Dawson and went slowly back to his car. He must pay a visit to the boarding-house in West Twenty-fifth Street; he could not go home until he found out that she was safe.

He started the engine and was preparing to back out from between two limousines when a shadow detached itself from the building and sprang on the running-board.

Knox ducked, half expecting a blow.

"It's all right, gov'nor. I ain't goin' to hurt you," said the fellow huskily. "I only want to tell you somethin'."

"What is it?" Jerry was still suspicious.

"I was in the house just now when you was askin' that old guy, Dawson, about yer lady friend."

The man at the wheel peered through the gloom and caught the gleam of a white shirt front. "What are you—a waiter?"

"Yes, sir. I'm one of the caterer's men. A while ago I was settin' out some of the empty cream-tubs and I seen somethin', somethin' you might like to know."

Jerry shut off the engine.

"Spill it," he directed laconically.

The waiter looked about to make sure he was not observed and, placing a cavernous mouth close to Jerry's ear, began.

By no stretch of the imagination was the tale a plausible one. At its conclusion the listener asked skeptically.

"A man came out of this rear entrance with something that looked like a body wrapped up in a blanket?"

"So he'p me, he did, gov'nor!"

"And there was a limousine waiting?"

"A big gray one. Say," his voice trembled with anxiety. "You think I'm lying but I ain't. I'm telling you straight. This chap drops his bundle into the car and the chauffer sings out kinda airy-like, 'Where to, me lud?' and the other says soft, but pretty sharp, 'Don't give me none of your lip! To Bellaires—drive like hell!' And they was off."

Jerry Knox sat back and reflected. Suddenly he turned to the waiter. He spoke with savage intensity.

"If I find out you've been stringing me, I'll hunt you up to-morrow, wherever you are and knock the tar out of you. Do you get me? But if there's any truth in your story, you can come around to this address and I'll square things with you."

He thrust a card into the outstretched hand and climbed out of the machine. A moment later, he was again on the Edgar threshold.

The first time this red-headed stranger had presented himself, Dawson had received him on his rather attractive face value. This second intrusion outraged all the old butler's ideas of propriety and he prepared to annihilate the intruder. But Jerry did not wait to be annihilated. He fixed the approaching Nemesis with a cold and authoritative eye.

"Tell Mr. Edgar I wish to see him at once," he ordered tersely.

Dawson gasped; but something in the tone warned him to be careful. He couched his reply in an outward semblance of deference.

"Mr. Edgar is not feeling very well, sir. He was obliged to excuse himself about an hour ago and retire. He will not see any one."

"He'll see me," announced Jerry grimly. "Tell him I've come to ask a question about a certain car that left for Bellaires. Stop a bit! Here's my card."

FOR the next few minutes he stood idly watching the departing guests. The music in the ballroom had ceased. The dance was evidently at an end. Now and then he saw a familiar face, caught a cheery greeting.

The affair had been just like any other of its kind: lavish, conventional and a bit stupid. It seemed ludicrous to suppose that a crime could have been committed under the well-bred noses of all these people.. Jerry began to think that the waiter's story sounded dubious. Why hadn't he gone first to the boarding-house?

His thoughts were interrupted by the return of Dawson. That functionary, with a stony countenance, announced that Mr.

Edgar would see Mr. Knox, and Jerry was conducted down the hall to a long, low-ceilinged room at the rear of the house.

Two men, sitting at a center-table with a tray of glasses and decanters between them, looked up sharply at his entrance. The young man thought he detected a veiled hostility in the scrutiny, and his suspicions returned with renewed force.

One of them he knew, from seeing him at the club and on the lecture platform, to be Mr. Edgar. The other, a tall, distinguished foreigner, was a stranger to him. Jerry noted the shrewd eyes, the full, overred lips and made a mental note, "Fingers crossed as far as you're concerned, my friend. I'd hate to come to close grips with you on a dark night."

Mr. Edgar spoke. "You wished to see me?"

"I did, sir."

"On what errand?"

"I thought perhaps your man had told you." Jerry was feeling his way like a cat in a strange alley.

"He mentioned something about a car, I believe. I did not understand the message. Explain."

Knox, without taking his eyes from the faces before him, struck boldly. "I want to know who went in that big gray car that left this house about an hour ago?"

Not a flicker changed the expression of either man. "They're too good," was Jerry's inward comment. "If they weren't hiding something, they'd act more interested." He tried a thrust from another direction.

"I had an appointment to stop here for a friend of mine, a Mrs. Collingwood——"

"Ah—h!" The foreigner had drawn a sudden sharp breath.

Knox paused, waited the fraction of a second, and went on.

"And at the door I was informed that no such person had been a guest in this house to-night." Again he was disappointed. Except for that one involuntary sighing breath both men appeared quite unmoved. Mr. Edgar even looked a trifle bored. "I happen to know she *did* come here," he persisted, baffled at the lack of response.

"Well, what if she did?" The question was fired like a shot from a gun.

Jerry fired in return, "Then where is she now?"

Mr. Edgar gave a short disagreeable laugh. "Well really, young man, how can I answer you that? If this Mrs.—Mrs.—What's-her-name succeeded in giving you the slip this evening she probably had her reasons for it. If I were in your place I think I should go home and try to forget all about her. She'll telephone you the first thing in the morning. Don't take the matter so seriously—"

A dull red color rose in Jerry's cheeks. He controlled himself with an effort.

"But suppose," he suggested, "that I do not hear from her in the morning—that she has disappeared—has been carried off to this place, Bellaires——?"

Mr. Edgar placed the tips of his fingers together and surveyed the intruder tolerantly.

"Suppose she has?" he agreed. "A good many cars have left here this evening. She must have been in one of them. Now, is there anything else I can do for you? If not," he reached out and touched the bell, "let us reserve the discussion of your love affairs for a more propitious hour. It is late and I have not been well and— Ah, Dawson," as the butler appeared, "show the young gentleman out. Sorry Mr.—Mr. Knox that I could not help you. Call again."

BEFORE he could utter a protest, the wrathful Jerry found himself bustled out. He had been laughed at, treated like a love-sick schoolboy. In his heart he felt that he had not scored a point.

But the interview had served one purpose. He had no longer any doubts about the waiter's story. Some one had been carried away from the house that night. Whether it was Enid Collingwood or not remained to be seen. Mr. Edgar's suave assurance had not deceived him — the little ambassador had something to hide.

No sooner had the door closed behind their visitor than the masks dropped from the faces of the two men. The duke sprang to his feet.

"I told you not to run the risk—" he began.

Mr. Edgar motioned him back.

"Sit down," he commented. "Don't lose your head. That young jackanapes can't bully me. As yet he is only hitting in the dark. He doesn't even know where Bellaires is."

"And how long do you think it will take him before he finds out?"

In the crisis the little ambassador was the better man of the two. With a hand that was remarkable for its steadiness, he picked up the table telephone. He called a number; then turned once more to his companion.

"For the next twenty-four hours I'm going to put him in a place where he can't find out anything, and in that time you and I— Oh, yes—" as the duke scowled—"you thrust yourself into this and you must see it through. You and I will go to Belaires and settle the affair once and for all——"

"You mean——?" the duke looked incredulous.

"I mean that prisoners are difficult boarders. One was bad enough but two——" The telephone claimed his attention once more. He spoke into the receiver.

The duke sank slowly back in his chair. Incredulity, amusement, admiration followed each other in quick succession across his face, as he listened.

"Hello! This is Mr. Edgar speaking. You remember that we were giving a dance up here to-night?— Yes, just about—I ought to have taken your advice and had a plainclothes man— What's that? Yes—yes. Oh, the usual thing—some of my wife's jewels—undoubtedly one of the guests. I'm certain of it—he's just left here. I want him locked up, but no notoriety—no—no, he's been drinking, so don't let him make any statements. Keep him quiet and in the morning if it's necessary I'll swear out a warrant. But I imagine when he's had a night to think things over he'll— How's that? All right, I'll leave it to you. By the way, is Detective Pheeny at the station? Good! He's worked for me before. Wait, I haven't told you who it is. His name is——" The little ambassador reached for the card of Mr. Jared Marshall Knox, Jr.

MEANWHILE Jerry, quite unconscious of the trap that was being set for him, followed Dawson down the long hall. The last guest had left, the lights had been hastily lowered, a few sleepy servants were making a pretense of setting things in order. As he passed the shadowy recess of a darkened room, a soft voice hailed him.

"Are you Mr. Knox?" said the voice.

Jerry wheeled about. Half hidden in the folds of the silken hangings, stood a girl. Even in the half light, he realized that she was not like any of the girls of his own set, and yet he did not know just why. Her sturdy little figure in its fluffy evening gown was partially concealed by a thick dark wrap which she had flung carelessly over one shoulder; but it suggested a power and poise quite at variance with the almost babyish expression of her smooth round face. From under their dusky lashes, her long topaz eyes peered up anxiously into his face. She did not wait for an answer to her question. She seized his hand and drew him toward her.

"You have come for your friend," she whispered. "You will not find her here. They have taken her away."

More startled than he cared to admit even to himself, he demanded,

"Who are you?"

For a tense moment they stood facing each other: the man, thinking only of the woman to whom he had quixotically pledged himself as knight errant; the girl, with no room in her mind for any one but the man before her. Never before had she been so hard pressed. Could she, dare she trust him? She decided that she could.

"I am the Princess Ottilie of Marania."

It was the last straw. Jerry staggered back. "Well, I'll be ——," he paused.

The princess stamped her foot.

"I thought you were a myth, a creature of the imagination, one of Percy Bennet's pipe-dreams—oh, I forgot, you don't know Percy Bennet, do you?"

The Princess Ottilie gave vent to her feelings; but as most of her remarks were in a language entirely new to Mr. Knox, he lost the full force of her meaning. He managed however to piece together the story of her meeting with Enid Collingwood and of the latter's subsequent visit to the Edgar house, though a skilfully timed lapse into her native tongue kept him in ignorance of the theft of the bag.

When she paused to take a breath, he managed to get in a question.

"But even so, what makes you think that anything out of the way has happened to Mrs. Collingwood?"

The girl shrugged a distracted shoulder.

"Did I not tell you the part about the slipper? She promised to leave it behind, like Cinderella. It was all in fun, at the time; but look!"

With a swift motion she drew something from the folds of her cloak and waved it before Jerry's startled eyes.

It was a gray velvet slipper!

At almost the same moment, a hand tapped sharply on his shoulder and a voice commanded, "This way, sir, if you please."

Dawson having reached the front door, only to find that he had lost the troublesome intruder, had returned post-haste in search of him. Jerry flung off the restraining hand and growled something uncomplimentary about butlers in general and Dawson in particular; but the old servant stood his ground.

"This way, sir, or I shall be obliged to call Mr. Edgar."

Jerry paused irresolute. Before he could decide what to do, the princess made up his mind for him.

"Do what he says," she urged. "Go, go at once, while you have the opportunity and—take me with you."

"What?" Jerry fairly shouted the word.

The girl seized his arm and shook it distractedly. "Take me with you! Take me with you! Don't leave me here. Save me!"

"Now look here." He made a few frantic efforts to pat the small hand that was mauling his sleeve. "Be reasonable. Saving people is one of the best little things I do; but I make it a rule to save only one a night; and to-night is Enid Collingwood's night."

He moved a step toward the door, but the girl still clung to him, begging not to be left behind. He had not the slightest intention of listening to her importunities until Dawson interfered.

"Miss Von Eison you had better go to your room. Your uncle would not permit you to leave the house with this person——"

Now there are ways and ways of saying the simple English word "person." Jerry had had a hectic day—nothing had gone right with him from start to finish. He had been irritated by mysterious messages, enticed into wild-goose chases, bullied, humiliated. His patience was exhausted.

With a grunt of rage, he seized the girl with one hand and with the other drew something from his overcoat pocket which caused Dawson to skip nimbly out of his path.

"Stand by the door, Higgins," the butler commanded and then, without waiting to see whether he had been obeyed, turned and scuttled off in the direction of Mr. Edgar's study.

Higgins, a martyr to duty, obediently sprawled his lanky body across the threshold. Knox, like a cave man dragging his booty, charged. Higgins in the dim light saw for the first time the object in his right hand, caught the glint of polished metal, felt the cold menace of steel in the tender region of his fifth rib.

"Get-the-hell-out-of-there!" roared Jerry.

The footman did not wait for a second invitation, and a moment later the raspberry-colored car was off once more, only this time it carried excess baggage—the princess, digging her fingers excitedly into the arm that guided the steering-wheel.

BY THE time they had gone two blocks, Jerry had begun to cool off. By the time they had gone a dozen, a depressing chill had gripped his vitals. He turned the car into a side street and stopped.

"Well?" he inquired.

"Well?" his companion answered.

"Is that all you've got to say for yourself?" asked Mr. Knox crossly. "Look at the trouble you've gone and got me into now. Lord knows, I didn't need any more. I've been in trouble right up to my neck, ever since I got out of bed this morning—no —" glancing at the hands on the dial of the clock ticking comfortably side by side with the speedometer—"yesterday morning. And now, for all I know I may have laid myself open to the Mann White Slave law or a charge of abduction, or some other darned technical thing that'll bring the whole town down about my ears."

The princess snuggled a little closer. She did not attempt to conceal the admiration in her upward glance.

"I do not believe that you would be afraid of the whole town, Mr. Jared Knox," she breathed softly. "You would simply hold them all at bay with your little pistol."

Knox scowled. He caught the admiring look, but was in no mood for philandering. With a ruthless haste, he sought to nip romance in the bud.

"Pistol!" he scoffed. "A lot you know about such things. That was only the monkey-wrench out of the automobile kit.

In the half light almost anything would have fooled that bunch of thick-wits."

The princess laughed softly—a throaty little laugh.

"You may have fooled the servants, but you did not fool me," she said. "I saw what it was the minute you pulled it out of your pocket. I adore a man of resource."

Jerry grunted and switched to safer territory. "Thanks, but my resources seem to be about at an end. I'd give two cents if I knew what to do with you at the present moment."

The princess shrugged an expressive shoulder. "It is quite simple. Take me with you. I am a very helpful person."

The young man at the wheel turned and eyed her severely. A certain Mrs. Grundy, at whom he had often scoffed, was calling loudly to him.

"You can't go with me, and that's flat. I think I'd better run you right back and——"

Again the fingers clutched his arm.

"No! No! No! You would not be so cruel. After this they would stop at nothing—not even murder."

"Talk sense," but he was impressed despite himself. "They wouldn't dare——"

"You say that, knowing what you do? How do you account for the disappearance of Mrs. Collingwood?"

Jerry sat for a moment, lost in thought. An idea that he might call in the aid of the police was dismissed almost as soon as it arrived. Mr. Edgar's word would be taken against his in any court, and the fact that he had assaulted a servant and run off with a young lady would further serve to discredit him in the eyes of impartial Justice, which as everybody knows, is blind anyway. No; manifestly the right thing to do was to find Enid Collingwood and find her without any further loss of time. He turned to the girl at his side.

"All right. For the present at any rate, I'll take you with me. The first place I intend to try is Mrs. Collingwood's boarding-house. We must be sure that she isn't there before we start heroics."

He swung the car into Fifth Avenue. A taxicab, speeding north, swerved crazily to avoid a collision. In the cab, Detective Pheeny barely turned his head. He was too absorbed in the mission on which he was bent to consider anything so trivial as a reckless driver. Neither he nor Jerry Knox realized what a close shave it had been.

At the boarding-house in West Twenty-fifth Street, Jerry learned after some difficulty and much abuse that the lady in the third floor front had not occupied her room all night. Certain remarks concerning the character of persons who knocked up respectable houses at four o'clock in the morning he ignored with icy dignity.

The episode, however, had taken the keen edge off a hastily formed plan to rout out some friends on the Upper West Side and to ask them to take the princess off his hands. The only other course open to him was to go to the studio and leave his embarrassing charge in the care of Tohari. He turned into the park.

THE first saffron streaks of an April dawn were cutting the eastern sky—the birds had began their early morning wrangle—somewhere a milk cart rattled noisily. In another hour half the city would be awake. By that time the Enid Collingwood trail would be too cold to pick up. He glanced at the girl by his side and gnashed his teeth. She had effectually gummed up the entire game.

Just then the Princess Ottilie shifted her position so that her profile with its delicious little tip-tilted nose and soft curving lips showed to the best advantage. It was the first really good look that Jerry Knox had had of her and it rather took his breath away. Several times he took surreptitious peeps and each time he had to readjust first impressions. By the time they had reached the studio, he had decided that, to say the least of it, his traveling companion was easy on the eyes.

The usually phlegmatic Tohari received them in a twitter of excitement which his master could only attribute to the unexpected presence of a young and beautiful lady, and to the unseasonableness of the hour.

He forestalled all attempt at conversation by ordering coffee, and after the little Japanese, still twittering, had disappeared into the kitchenette, turned to the princess.

"Make yourself as comfortable as possible while I get into some less conspicuous scenery." Half-way up the staircase which led to his own room, he paused. Don't happen to know where Bellaires is, do you?" In a few words he told her the waiter's story.

The princess clinched and unclinched her hands excitedly. A spot of red flamed in either cheek.

"What did I tell you?" she cried. "They will stop at nothing. They will——"

Jerry raised his hand.

"I'm beginning to get the idea, princess. We're dealing with a hard crowd; but the question before the house at the present moment is, do you know anything about this hangout—this Bellaires place?"

The girl shook her head. It was only what Jerry had expected.

Ten minutes later, equipped for the road, he dashed back to the studio.

"I've got it!" he shouted. "I've got it! 'Bellaires the Beautiful'—Sunday editions, please copy—early Italian architecture—sunken gardens—I ought to be kicked for not remembering it right away—I've seen pictures of it twenty times. It's the country home of the Edgars on the South Shore of Long Island. Now, do you get it? For some reason, known only to themselves, they've abducted Enid Collingwood and have made her a prisoner down at Bellaires. It won't take me long to settle this business." He struggled into his coat.

THE princess sprang to her feet and clapped her hands. "Take me with you," she begged. "Take me with you."

He withered her with a glance.

"In that rig?" he scoffed. "Kindly descend to *terra firma*."

Tohari appeared with fresh muffins and Knox hailed him.

"I want you to look out for Miss Von Eison. See that she has everything she wants and don't let any one annoy her." And then to the princess: "You'll have the whole place to yourself and—" A sudden thought froze the words on his lips. He turned once more to the Japanese. "Where did you put young Hendricks? I forgot that he was here."

Tohari smirked consciously. Once more Knox was struck by that undercurrent of excitement that was so foreign to his small serving-man. He waited curiously for the answer to his question.

"Mr. Hendricks, he gone." The smirk became more pronounced.

"Gone?" Jerry looked troubled. "Why, he was in no condition to look out for himself. Did he go alone?"

Tohari shook a violent negation. "Mr. Hendricks, he went along of police gentleman."

"A policeman? What in the name of commonsense are you driving at? Quick, now, what's the rest of this story?"

Tohari, well aware that he had at last secured the center of the stage, folded his hands over the third button of his waistcoat and commenced. Half-way through, Knox interrupted him.

"Do you mean to tell me that an officer came here looking for me, and that you palmed off Hendricks on him because the youngster was too drunk to know what you were doing with him?"

The little Japanese half closed his eyes and his smile widened to an alarming extent. He had served his beloved master. Mr. Hendricks had merely been the fatted calf, offered on the altar of sacrifice. His fate was of no moment. Tohari was content.

Jerry stood spellbound, unable for the moment to think or act. But in a rush the full significance of what he had just heard came over him. He turned to the princess.

"Do you hear what he says? The police are on my track already. That looks like business. They mean to lock me up on a technical charge because—because—" He paused. His ideas were clarifying with dazzling rapidity. "Because they want to get me out of the way for the next few hours. I know too much. I could queer their little game. And while I'm locked up in a two-by-six cell they'll— By George! they'll probably go down to Bellaires and—" He seized the princess by the shoulder. "Hurry up! We haven't got a minute to lose if we want to save Enid Collingwood."

"We?" she cried. "Do you mean that I'm to go, too?"

"Of course I do. You didn't think you could stay here after this? Why, the police may find out any minute that they have the wrong man and they'll go over this place with a fine-tooth comb. Here, hustle into this other coat of mine and this extra cap and goggles. We'll cover up as much of you as we can and trust to luck for the rest." He swung about on Tohari. "If anybody comes here, you don't know a thing. Do you understand? Good! Now then," to the girl who was fitting the goggles into place, "are you ready? We've got to beat them to it. But if I can't coax fifty miles an hour out of the old red wagon, I'll never drive another car as long as I live—s'help me God!"

They ran down the stairs without waiting for the lift, dashed through the main hall, caromed into two delivery boys just outside the door and amid a shower of newspapers and rolls, scrambled into the automobile and were off.

As they swung into Columbus Circle; a clock struck six.

ENID COLLINGWOOD opened her eyes. For some time she had been conscious of a splitting headache, an uncomfortable lack of stability and a tang of salt in the breeze that swept her cheek. Dazedly she looked about her.

She was in a limousine, traveling over a rough road at break-neck speed. On either side a patchwork of sand and scrub oak stretched in an unbroken wilderness to the horizon line. Nowhere was there any sign of habitation.

Over all, like a chiffon veil, hung the mystic gray of early dawn. In another half-hour it would be broad daylight. With her in the car were two men. One, obviously a chauffeur, sat in the driver's seat. The other occupied the place by her side.

Gradually the fresh air whipped away the cobwebs. Her brain cleared. She remembered the events of the preceding day: the encounter with the Princess Ottilie, the attack in Mr. Edgar's study, the battle with the two men, the stumble over a footstool. Had it not been for that unlucky stumble she might have had an even chance. But the footstool had been her undoing. She had crashed to the floor, striking her head against the table, and after that had come oblivion.

She stole another glance at the man by her side and her heart sank.

It was Karl, the young foreigner whom the Princess Ottilie had so frankly professed to hate.

He was gazing straight ahead, his eyes intent on the road, the hand on his knee clinched about a small bull-nosed automatic.

The bristling blond pompadour, ruddy skin, thick neck—all proclaimed him a Teuton; but the bold dark eyes suggested a mingling of the Latin, a strain of the soft southern blood that makes for romance and color. It was a mongrel type, familiar enough in certain sections of the Balkans, but new to Enid Collingwood. Intuition warned her of its dangers. Bred outside the law, raised to ruthlessness, this man would stop at nothing. She must be on her guard constantly.

"Some roads, eh, Bo?" It was the voice of the chauffeur, dryly recalling them to prosaic commonplaces. "If you was to ast me, I'd say 'damn Long Island anyway.'"

Karl turned upon the speaker.

"I haf not ask you. Shut up your mouth, Hennesy. With it you talk too much."

"Oh, very well!" Hennesy was not at all abashed. "Only I thought I'd warn you, there's some bumps comin' to you."

As though to demonstrate, he drove the car over a gulley, lifted it back with a dextrous twist of the wheel and, before his passengers could recover themselves, turned sharply in at an ivy-covered gateway.

Through a grove of small pine-trees the road lay straight and well kept. The car skimmed forward with a soft crunching of gravel. A bird rose from its nesting-place, wings whirring. Beyond the trees the waves lapped idly on a sandy beach. After the confused hurly-burly of the ride, the peace and quiet were more startling than a crash of sound.

At the foot of a flight of steps which led to a brick-paved terrace the car came to a stop. To the left lay the house, an impressive pile of stonework, its rounded arches and slender columns half concealed by a thick growth of ivy.

"This," remarked the chauffeur impudently, "is as far as I go. Which is what old Hindy said to the Kaiser when he heard the Yanks had reached the— What's that?" For Karl had ripped out a guttural oath. "Oh, *very* well."

Enid paid little heed to the wrangle which ensued. Her eyes were traveling from the ocean, with its bleak sand dunes, to the house—grim and forbidding in its winter boardings. It struck her that no more isolated spot for a conspiracy could have been chosen. What chance of escape had she here? Who was to stop these men if they had planned to do away with her? Her thoughts reverted to Jerry Knox. What would he say if he could know where his wretched News Brokerage business had landed her? It certainly had all the thrills he had predicted and— She was recalled to the moment.

Tired of his argument with Hennesy, Karl had stepped out of the limousine. With in an imperious gesture he pointed to the house.

"Go und dis Bambi find. Make haste! I sheever." He commenced pacing beside the car, his arms beating a vigorous tattoo across his chest.

With a scowl the chauffeur obeyed. He was plainly nettled by the tone of authority.

Through the window Enid watched the stocky figure tramping up and down the road. At any other time his antics would have amused her. No glamour of romance clings to black broadcloth, patent-leather pumps and a silk hat when the hands of the clock point to six A. M. Karl was cold, tired, irritable. His efforts to relax his cramped limbs only added to his physical discomfort. She could not help wondering why he had taken a long night's ride without an overcoat and suddenly realized that the coat was wraped about her own shoulders. The discovery was reassuring. He had shown her consideration—he might not be such a bad sort after all—perhaps he would listen to an appeal. She resolved to try him and see. But before she could think how to begin, the sound of footsteps announced the return of Hennesy. He crossed the terrace, calling as he came.

"You don't have to worry about warming up. Bambi says to-day's goin' to be a scorcher—a regular weather-breeder. Hi, there Bambi!" This to some one lagging a few paces behind. "Get a move on. Don't keep his Highness waiting. Can't you see he's all wore out after his ride?"

Ignoring the witticism, Karl ran up the steps; but before he could reach the top, the man called Bambi appeared and towered over him. Karl paused and to Enid seemed to flinch from the contact. Nor did she wonder at his hesitation.

The newcomer was fantastic, a creature from the pages of a fairy-tale, a Snarleyow in the flesh. Nature had designed him for a giant but half-way through the task had changed her mind. From the waist up he was a Hercules, brawny, powerful; from the waist down a dwarf, his bandy legs ill-fitted to bear the weight of so grotesque a body. In his eyes there lurked the smoldering fanaticism of the Far East.

"Who is he?" she whispered to Hennesy, who had come down the steps and was tinkering about the car.

"Oh, he's a nut." And then grudgingly: "Nobody knows what he is or where he came from except the boss. Some say the dirty heathen was doing time in his own country and Mr. Edgar got him pardoned. Some say—worse. The boss is funny that way. He likes to pick up men that have shot their bolt. He's got a hold on all of us. Only, if I was Bambi—" a speculative look at the figure on the terrace—"a big husk like him, I'd—" He paused, conscious that his tongue was running away with him. His face grew sullen. "Ah, what are yer tryin' to get at? I ain't goin' to tell yer nothin'. Only, take a tip from me. Bambi belongs to the boss. He'd lay down and let the old guy use him for a doormat. It wouldn't do to start no funny business when he was around—see?" Sliding the fingers of his right hand suggestively across his throat, he turned his back upon her, lifted the hood of the car and became absorbed in the engine.

ENID looked curiously at the object of their conversation. In that warped body, was there a soul straight enough to harbor devotion for any one? She doubted it. As he stood before the dapper Karl he looked less human than ever. She could not hear what was being said, but she felt intuitively that she was under discussion. With every faculty strained to the bursting-point, she watched, hoping for some word or gesture to give her a hint as to the meaning of the conversation. At length Bambi turned on his heel and shambled off at a dog-trot in the direction of the house. Karl stood for a moment watching the retreating figure, then swung about and ran lightly down the steps.

"Come," he said, extending his hand.

Enid stirred obediently. She let the coat slip from her shoulders, unwrapped the blanket which had been securely tucked about the lower part of her body and stood up. She was stiff and lame. As she moved to leave the car, she discovered that one of her feet was slipperless.

Karl followed the direction of her gaze and once more offered his hand.

"I help you—so! Your slipper it iss left behind. I haf not discover until too late. A pair at the house we shall find."

His hand succeeded in capturing hers and enveloped it in a slow, warm clasp.

She scarcely noticed the contact. With his words, hope had come. The night before she *had* succeeded then in leaving a clew for the Princess Ottilie! Had the girl found the slipper and would she understand?

Absently she let Karl help her up the steps. His arm closed about her with a reassuring pressure. Nor did his hold relax until they had crossed the courtyard and entered the house.

Her first impression of the place was that it had not been opened for months. A clammy odor of upholstered furniture and mildewed leather hung over everything. It brought a roar from her companion.

"Gott! A tomb it iss. Open the windows und let in some air yet. One should a gas helmet haf in such an atmosphere."

Slowly Bambi moved to obey. His arms made nothing of the task. One by one the heavy wooden shutters came down, the casements swung open.

AS THE light penetrated to the farthermost corners, Enid saw that they were in a spacious hall.

The beauty of his surroundings was completely lost upon Karl. The thought uppermost in his mind was food and he wasted no time in making his wants known to Bambi.

His orders were received in silence. The gardener continued to work at the windows as though he had not heard. When the last shutter had been removed, he crossed, with the same slow, shuffling gait, to a door on the other side of the hall and threw it open. It led into a cheerful, chintz-hung room. As they entered, he backed out, closing the door behind them.

Karl looked about the pretty breakfast-room.

"Come, come," he said. "Not so bad for America. You like it, iss it not so, *Fräulein?*"

Enid nodded absently. She was in no mood to make conversation. Her head was aching—her nerves unstrung. Wearily she dropped into the nearest chair.

"Why have you brought me to this place?" she asked, her voice quivering.

Karl covertly studied his companion.

"You ask me why iss it? *Nein, nein, Fräulein.* It iss for you to tell to me the reason. I know it not."

With an indignant gesture she straightened in her chair. Her eyes flashed.

"You mean to tell me that you are a party to a thing like this without knowing why? I don't believe it."

He did not answer. His brow puckered thoughtfully. Her words, instead of angering him, seemed rather to have had the opposite effect. He eyed her with a new interest.

"Perhaps," she went on, her sense of injury getting the better of her fear of him, "perhaps you will tell me next that you do not know the Princess Ottilie or the Duke Waldemar or—Mr. Edgar. Who is this girl, anyway? Is she what she pretends to be? What is she doing in America, and why were you running after her yesterday afternoon in Central Park?"

"Oh, now, now, *Fräulein!* Too many questions already you haf ask. It makes to me impossible an answer—" He paused. Enid's stockinged foot had tapped the floor. With exaggerated solicitude he sprang from his chair. "A thousand pardons. Your slipper—again I forget." He commenced a bowing retreat toward the door. "So soon I come back, a pair I bring."

She watched him go, conscious that it was only an excuse to escape her questions. Nor did he return until the breakfast had been cooked and placed upon the table. He brought back with him a pair of half-worn tennis shoes, which, to her relief, were a passable fit.

During the meal which followed, Karl said little and ate much. The sight of such deliberate gorging destroyed what appetite Enid might have had. When the last dish had been emptied, Karl sank back in his chair, a sigh of satisfaction on his lips. His eye rested on the untasted breakfast of his companion.

"Eat," he urged. "It iss goot to start the day on a full stomach."

She forced down a cup of the strong black coffee. After a time it quieted the throbbing at her temples. With relief came reaction. She longed to sleep and forget.

To her surprise Karl settled himself to talk. He took up the thread of the conversation at the point where it had been broken off an hour before.

"*Fräulein,*" he commenced, "you haf ask me why you are here. The question it makes me to think. Up till now I haf suppose it iss an affair of—" He blew a discreet kiss from the tips of his fingers. "But of a sudden I see—how you call it?—on the business a new light. Mr. Edgar, he iss an American, he iss oldt, he hass not so great an eye for the ladies. Why, then, I ask myself, hass he smuggle away the so beautiful *Fräulein?*"

As he talked Enid began to realize that the man was sincere. He did not know why she had been abducted. For some reason the Duke Waldemar had not taken him into his confidence. Probably the duke had good cause to distrust his young aid. Karl, she felt sure, would not scruple to use an unexpected bit of knowledge for his own advantage. Why, then, should she not barter the secret of Mr. Edgar's treachery for her own freedom? The idea appealed to her, but her recent experiences had sharpened her wits. She was dealing with a clever scamp. She resolved to play him carefully.

"Can you not, *Fräulein,*" he urged, "of some reason think? What iss it that hass hapened in Mr. Edgar's house, before I am call to carry you off—so." He made a gesture of lifting a weight over his shoulder. "Yesterday in the Park I think you haf come from the sky clear. Now, all at once, I put two und two together. There iss a reason?"

"No," she shook her head wearily. "I can't think of one—unless——"

"Yes—unless?"

"Well, there *was* something—something I overheard between the Duke Waldemar and Mr. Edgar. Something about——"

"Ah—" A breath, sharply taken. It seemed to come, not only from the man opposite her, but from somewhere behind him. Startled, she half rose from her chair. Over Karl's shoulder she saw Bambi. He had just shuffled in from the pantry, a tray in his upraised hands. His great sunken eyes stared at her from under their drooping lids. Slowly he withdrew one hand from the tray and closed it about his own throat. His grip tightened. The nails as they sank into the dark flesh left triangular gray blotches. The chauffeur's warning came back. "Bambi belongs to the boss. It wouldn't do to start no funny business when he was around." With a gasp she dropped back into her chair—her hands before her eyes.

Karl sprang from his seat. The little by-play had escaped him, but the gardener's appearance had spoiled a critical situation. He did not hesitate to call him for it.

Bambi accepted the abuse indifferently. Seeing that it was a waste of breath to say anything more Karl turned to Enid.

"Come, *Fräulein,*" he said, "let us go. Out on the terrace we shall——"

But Enid interrupted.

"No, no. I can not talk any more now. My head—" a gesture with both hands to her temples—"it is simply splitting. I must have some rest. After last night—I am exhausted. Can't you see?"

He saw. She apparently was on the verge of hysterics. Nothing was to be gained by pushing matters at that moment. With a shrug he acquiesced. His heels came together with military precision. He made her a formal bow. Then in his abrupt way proceeded to give some orders to Bambi.

ENID hesitated. The thought of going alone into the upper part of the house with this creature who had already tried to frighten her was, to say the least of it, rather disconcerting. For a moment she contemplated throwing herself on the mercy of Karl and telling him the whole story; but the fear of immediate consequences held her back. She could not afford one false move. Only clear headwork could get her out of this scrape now—that and a modicum of courage.

And then came the thought—suppose she could not get out of it—that here and now the end were decreed? Unconsciously she drew herself up. Her shoulders squared. Well, what difference would it make? Hadn't she said only yesterday that she would welcome a chance to die? And Jerry Knox had doubted her—had asked if she weren't talking for effect. Here was a chance to show him, to show everybody. But if she had to go, she would not go tamely. She would show these foreigners that an American woman was as brave as her Russian or Polish or Belgian sisters. With her courage well bolstered up she followed the gardener out of the breakfast-room and into the hall.

It was only when the comparative darkness of the upper floor had been reached that she began to drop from her top-lofty mood. The silence of her guide oppressed her. Why did he slink along like that? Now that he had the chance, why didn't he say something? She stumbled after him, groping her way past pieces of furniture, dim shrouded outlines in her path. What had he been saying to Karl about her when they first— She paused. Had he said anything? Had he since they first came uttered a word? No, she had never heard the sound of his voice. With a shiver she wondered if he were dumb. Her dread of him increased a hundredfold at the thought.

A door opened. She saw a bedroom, modern, luxurious. Its windows were wide, letting in the light and sunshine. Bambi stood on the sill, holding the door back for her to pass. In order to enter the room she was obliged to go close to him. She held her breath as she crossed the threshold, half afraid that one of those huge arms would reach out and crush her, but he did not move.

For what seemed an interminable interval he remained—staring. Then without releasing her from his eyes, drew back step by step, pulled the door softly after him and was gone.

The key turned in the lock. She was a prisoner now, with all that the word signified.

The realization of her predicament rushed over her. With a little cry she flung herself full length on the bed and gave way to tears. Thoroughly exhausted, after a time she slept.

JUST how long the refreshing unconsciousness of sleep claimed her she could not tell, but she was aroused at last by something that made her sit up with a jerk, her heart thumping wildly.

Somewhere, far off, but in the house she felt sure, she had heard a cry. She waited, hoping it would be repeated. Only the twittering of the birds in the vines outside her window broke the silence.

She got up and moved about restlessly. The room was in almost twilight darkness. Could she have slept through the whole day? Had night come on again?

She stepped to the window and looked out. Black clouds were racing in from the sea. The air was heavy. Not a branch stirred. To the south a storm was gathering. On the dunes the figure of a man was making labored progress through the sand. She strained her eyes. It was Karl, running toward the house.

Somewhere he had managed to find riding-breeches and puttees to replace his evening clothes. His white shirt stood out in the gathering gloom. She watched till his figure disappeared on the terrace below, and then a flash of lightning drove her from the window.

Mechanically she went to the door and turned the knob. To her surprise it yielded to her touch. Not without misgivings she opened the door and peered into the hall.

On the landing at the head of the stairs stood Bambi, deep in the mysteries of some rite. The fast-dying daylight lit his face and misshapen body. His head was thrown back, his great muscular arms upraised. At regular intervals he hopped from foot to foot. His lips moved but no sound escaped them. In his eyes shone once more the frenzied exaltation of the fanatic.

Cautiously Enid Collingwood drew back into her room and waited. By the time she had summoned sufficient courage to look again, the landing was deserted. Bambi had gone. Better Karl a million times than this sort of thing. She resolved to go down and find him.

Hastily closing the door behind her she made her way to the staircase, but on the top step she paused. In the hall below Karl was saying:

"Do not tell me, I haf not heard it. It was the voice of the *Fräulein*. *Nein?*"—interrogatively—"Vell, who then? What iss the matter with this place? Who iss here besides ourselves?"

"How the hell do I know who's here?" It was Hennesy who answered. "And if I did, do you think I'd tell you, you (a string of oaths) dirty German? You're like all the rest."

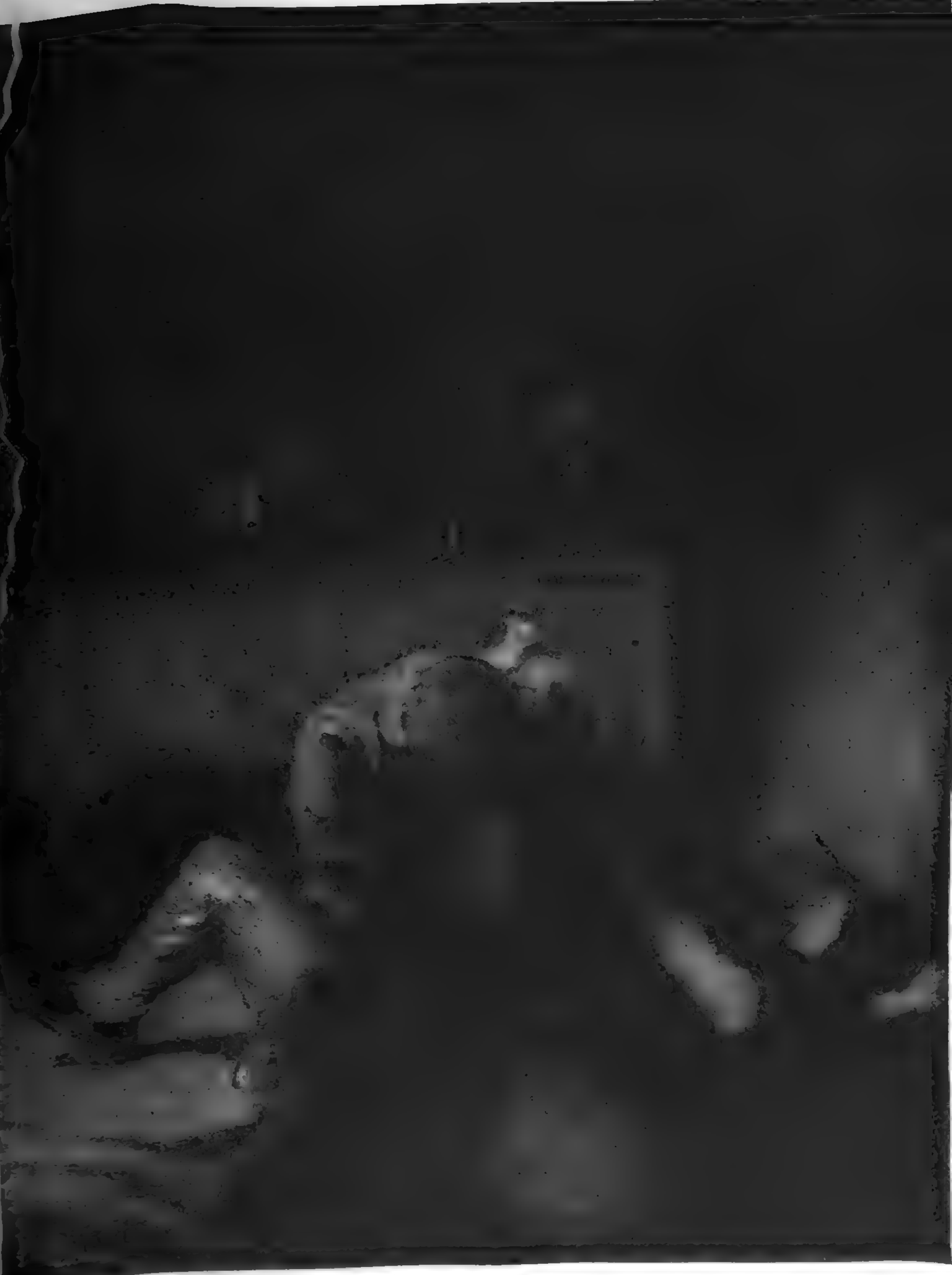
There was a crash. The chauffeur had measured his length on the floor.

His assailant contemplated the prostrate figure with a contemptuous smile, stirred it gently with the toe of his boot and turned away. As he did so he caught sight of Enid. Instantly his expression changed.

"So, *Fräulein*, you are safe. I haf most frightened been. I thought——"

"You mean that cry?" Her eyes widened at the recollection. "Yes, yes, I heard it too. It was some one—some one in this house."

Her path of escape was clear again. But before she could take a step there was a hoarse roar and



the bulky mass changed its formation. Slowly one section of it began to rise above the other.

Karl looked thoughtful.

"This Bambi," he said. "I trust him not. He hass a face of evil. I think to him a pleasure it would make if the *Fräulein* haf a fear."

"I see. You think that Bambi might have tried to frighten me. Perhaps you are right." She described what she had seen on the landing a few minutes before. "He certainly looked crazy enough to be up to anything. And yet I have a feeling—that—that it was not his voice."

"But, *Fräulein*, if——"

He was interrupted by Hennesy, who had staggered to his feet. The Irishman was maddened by his humiliation, but he had wit enough to respect the fist that had felled him. One of his eyes was closing rapidly, his lip bled from a nasty gash. He slapped futilely at his disordered clothes.

"I'll get even with you for this," he growled, keeping at a safe distance. "Just you wait."

Karl snapped his fingers. The threat did not appear to trouble him. He turned once more to Enid.

Hennesy stood for a moment glaring at the broad back, then with a growl flung away, kicking at the pieces of furniture which barred his progress, and disappeared into the passage that led to the pantry.

WITH a little apology for the scene she had just witnessed, Karl followed Enid into the room where they had breakfasted. She flinched as a flash of lightning cut across the windows and he hastened to draw the heavy chintz hangings. Smiling amiably upon her fears, he inquired:

"The storm, you like it not?"

"I'm terribly afraid of the thunder part," she admitted. "I never knew we had electrical storms as early as this."

"Ah, but yes!"

"Tell me—" her smile was conciliatory—"tell me, what do they propose to do with me?"

He shook his head.

"Of that, *Fräulein*, I know nothing. I am but a soldier—true, a soldier of fortune, but a soldier nevertheless. I obey orders."

"But surely you *will* not attempt to hold me here? If it means nothing to you personally, let me escape."

He shook his head. She tried again.

"Can you not see my position? Only fancy if your wife or sister were similarly placed, how you would feel!"

"Women, *Fräulein*, they are all of a likeness. Young, old, rich, poor, pretty, plain, I trust them not. Take them, I say, love them, leave them; und then, forget, them. The man around the corner, with his so fat purse, will bring to them a consolation."

With a laugh as frank and ingenuous as a child's he flung back his head until every sound white tooth was exposed to view.

She watched him helplessly. Such pagan philosophy paralyzed her. As though conscious of her wondering gaze, he straightened up. The laugh died on his lips. He became serious once more. Dropping his voice to an insinuating whisper, he said:

"Und yet, *Fräulein*, I am not so bad a fellow as you think. I could a goot friend be. Trust me," coaxingly, "the thing which you haf heard in Mr. Edgar's house last night, tell it to me und——"

She shook her head.

"I don't know that I care to tell you now." With a nervous look in the direction of the hall. "You must give me time to think."

Her refusal made him all the more eager. He got up and came closer.

"Time to think? For why?"

"Because," she parried, "if I tell you I am putting my life in immediate danger. I must be sure that you will help me to get away before I——"

His hand motioned her to silence. An ugly look robbed his face of its smooth contours.

"It iss not for you to make with me the bargain. Haf you—" He paused. For several minutes a telephone bell had been tinkling somewhere in the hall.

The hangings in the doorway parted. Bambi stood in the aperture. Jerking one twisted thumb toward his shoulder, he signaled that the phone was to be answered, and Karl, with a hesitating glance in Enid's direction, turned and followed him out of the room.

Left alone, she hurried to the window, her thoughts bent on escape. But the sight of the wind-swept dunes and black thunderclouds held her irresolute. Beaten before the hurricane, bushes and young trees bowed to the earth. Small chance for a woman on foot to travel far in such a storm. She must wait a little longer.

It was several minutes before Karl returned. He came in hurriedly and crossed the room to her side. Something in his face made her wish that she had braved the storm and tried to get away while the opportunity offered. His whole attitude had changed. He spoke sharply.

"*Fräulein*, I haf no more time to waste. Mr. Edgar and the Duke Waldemar will be in here before the hour it iss gone. This thing you haf learned, I would know it now. Come, you understand."

Instinctively she drew back, seeking protection behind the table. With a lunge he caught her wrist and drew her to him, his fingers gripping into her flesh.

"No, no!" she cried, beating at him with her free hand. "I tell you, no! Let me go. You are hurting me."

Slowly he raised the imprisoned wrist above her head, then down and backward. The next moment he had both hands in the same clasp.

"So!" He twisted her around so that her face was upturned to his. "Will you tell me?"

Bambi or no Bambi, her one thought now was to escape from this savage inquisition. "I will," she panted, "only let me go and I will."

His hold relaxed. Rubbing her aching wrists, she stepped back. From the hall came the creaking of loose boards, like a twig snapped under a stealthy foot, but the occupants of the room where too absorbed to heed it.

"Well?" demanded Karl impatiently.

Since she had no longer any choice in the matter, she determined to make her disclosure dramatic enough to satisfy him.

"Mr. Edgar—" her voice dropped to a whisper—"Mr. Edgar is the man who planned the assassination of Prince Ferdinand Adolphus of Marania. He——"

Karl interrupted her.

"Ach, so I haf suspect for some time yet but it iss not to prove—so easy." Then, indifferently: "If this iss all you haf to tell—" he shrugged—"you shall a prisoner remain. When the duke haf come he shall decide."

"Wait!" in passionate entreaty, "wait! There is something more. That cry you heard a little while ago—don't you see—don't you understand? In this house—" She paused.

"Yes, yes! Go on."

"In this house, they are holding a prisoner—a prisoner who knows all about the affair and could——"

"*Ach Gott!*" The table shivered under the descending fist. "I might haf known. So that iss the liddle game of the Duke Waldemar?" He was lost for a moment in scowling meditation. "I it wass who should play the monkey und pull from the fire the chestnuts while he—the—" He swore savage, guttural oaths, blasting the duke to a nethermost hell. In the midst of his tirade his eyes rested on the white face of his companion. The disgust he saw there he mistook for disappontment. It tickled his vanity. His head went back and the room echoed to his boisterous laughter.

"Almost I haf forgotten the *Fräulein.* Haf no fear, lady-bird, you shall your reward get." His glance traveled over her in insolent appraisal. "Come, come! Why do you shrink from me? I will not *eat* you. A kiss to bind our friendship!"

Before she could elude him he had seized her in his arms and pressed his lips against her neck. With a cry she wrenched herself free and struck him across the mouth.

Reeling from the blow, Karl brought up against the table. The small lamp fell to the floor with a shivering of glass, plunging the room into semidarkness.

OUTSIDE the storm had broken. The waves no longer lapped upon the beach. Black and angry they broke with a sullen roar. A flash of lightning flickered through the curtains and momentarily bathed the room in a ghostly white radiance. It brought out the features of the man slobbering in speechless rage, the figure of the woman flattened against the opposite wall—and the outlines of a strange bulk crouching in the doorway. As the light played about this third actor in the hastily staged melodrama, he reached into his blouse and drew out a knife—a short, broad weapon, formidable enough to slit the throat of an ox. With a deliberate movement he stooped, gripped the handle in his powerful jaws and, dropping on all fours, began a silent, crab-like journey across the room. The gloom following the flash was sepulchral.

Enid took a deep breath. Quite unconscious of the new danger, her one thought was to keep the length of the room between herself and Karl. The blow had been a mistake. She realized it now. If they came to close grips again, she must fight or surrender. No use to expect any consideration—no use to beg for time. She strained her ears to catch the first sound.

And then Karl moved.

He started around the room by way of the window, effectually cutting off escape in that direction. He did not hurry. He came with the leisurely step of one who has no doubts as to the success of his enterprise. His assurance terrified her. As she retreated, she felt his hands groping in search of her.

Hurriedly she took another step. A slight noise from behind caught her ear. She cast a startled glance over her shoulder.

Something was creeping along the floor!

Her eyes, partially accustomed to the gloom, made out the dim, misshapen outline.

Bambi!

Fascinated she watched him crawl past her, his shaggy black head so close she could have touched it. Another wriggling glide and he was between herself and Karl. A blinding flash tore away the darkness. She saw Bambi scramble to his feet, his hand raised to strike. Involuntarily she screamed a warning. It was drowned in the crash that followed the flash.

For a moment blinded, she lost sight of them, but she heard the grunting impact of two bodies and knew that Karl was defending himself. Locked in each other's arms, their united bulk gradually emerged from the shadows. At first, almost in silence, they clung in that terrific oneness, each fearful lest the loosening of his hold mean instant annihilation; but gradually the need for air to fill their lungs brought out great sobbing breaths. The sound was animal in its ferocity.

What would be the outcome of this struggle? Which one would be beaten, and what would the survivor do with her? If it were Karl? She shivered. He had declared himself. If it were Bambi? No, no—she would not be left to such a madman. Now was her opportunity to escape. With her jailers occupied in killing each other she might succeed in leaving the house and getting to the main road before her flight was discovered. She resolved to try. Never taking her eyes from the two men, she began a weak-kneed pilgrimage in the direction of the door.

A fist thudding into flesh, the rasping of torn linen, and one of the two came hurtling at her. She cowered, expecting to be carried to the floor by the weight of his fall; but by a superhuman effort he regained his equilibrium, slid a foot or two, pawing the air, and rushed back to renew the attack. His opponent met him half-way and the scene of battle changed.

They were fighting now between herself and the door. The frenzied scuffling of feet told her how desperately each man was struggling for the advantage. They rocked, they swayed, they staggered. Inch by inch they squirmed back to the center of the room.

Her path of escape was clear again.

She advanced a cautious foot; but before she could take a step there was a hoarse roar and the bulky mass changed its formation. Slowly one section of it began to rise above the other. It loomed higher and higher. For a moment it bobbed helplessly, legs kicking, arms waving—then, as though shot from a catapult, it went flying through space.

The table spun over before it, adding glass and silver to the confusion of sound. In the center of the room, a hideous, misshapen form stood silent, solitary—Bambi had conquered.

Enid Collingwood clapped her hand to her mouth, but not in time to stifle a scream of terror. Already she seemed to feel those twisted fingers reaching for her own throat. Her limbs refused their burden. She sank to her knees.

And then—a surprised grunt, and the great figure began to sway. Back and forth it tottered and before her astonished eyes buckled up and sank out of sight.

IN a room over the pantry the chauffeur, Hennesy, paused in the act of administering first-aid to his injured eye. There was a noise which needed explaining coming from the floor below. He laid down the piece of beefsteak which had been about to serve as a poultice, walked to the door, opened it an inch or two and listened.

"What's that guy up to?" he wondered.

A muffled scuffling and the labored pant of weary lungs increased his curiosity. He slipped out into the hall, he began to realize what was going on and his eyes glistened.

"It's Bambi! The old son-of-a-gun has

got to the Dutchman and is knocking daylight out of him." A smile of satisfaction lit up the battered countenance. He would go down and get a ring-side view.

As he reached the head of the stairs, he came to an abrupt halt.

Somewhere in the west wing he heard a dull thudding.

"Hello," he said, "there goes the other one. I wonder who they've got caged up in that room. Bambi was in such a sweat when I asked him about it that I didn't have the nerve to go poking around." Then shrewdly: "I guess this is as good a chance as I'm liable to get, so I'll pass up the scrap and take a look." His heavy boots squeaked noisily down the corridor.

A crash from the floor below indicated some kind of a crisis.

Again he paused irresolute. "Damned if I know what to do. This place is a regular three-ring circus. No matter how you try you're bound to miss some of the show. Good night!"

A woman's scream had raised the hair on his head.

He ran back to the stairs. Cautiously he crept down four or five steps until he could look into the breakfast-room. What he saw sent him up again pell-mell.

So it was Karl, not Bambi, who had won the fight! Karl, and with a knife! Holy cats! This wasn't a fight—this was a murder! Somebody oughta go down and take the knife away from him. He looked ruefully at his own diminutive body. Fat chance! The thudding in the west wing grew louder. He hesitated. Well, after all, why not? A little help would come in pretty good just now. Turning, he raced in the direction of the thuds.

He stopped before a door with two heavy iron bolts. A series of kicks shook the panels.

"Hi, there, Bo!" he yelled above the din. "There's a bad guy down-stairs. He's on the loose. If I let you out, will you help me to do him up?" A muffled sound came from within. "Oh, well, I guess you mean 'yes' all right. Here goes."

He drew the bolts. The door opened inward. With a cautious hand he pushed it and drew back. The aperture widened. He saw a tall commanding form, its head partially concealed by a towel which had been used in a rough attempt to make a gag. As his eye rested on the clothing which hung in limp folds from the shoulders, the chauffeur's lower jaw dropped. "Well, I'll be—." The words died on his lips. There was a rush, an impact and he went down like a dog.

The prisoner had darted headlong from the room and down the hall in the direction of the stairs.

ENID COLLINGWOOD, when she saw the last of Bambi, thought that her enemies, like two Kilkenny cats, had destroyed each other by the ferocity of their passions and that she was free of both. Painfully she dragged herself to her feet. She had no wish to see the results of that terrifying combat. With her arm across her face she moved toward the door.

Before she had gone a dozen steps, the window-curtains were abruptly thrown open, letting in a flood of light. The storm was over. The sun, a pale yellow disk, was climbing from behind a bank of clouds. Its rays fell upon the scene of wreckage, the overturned table, the broken dishes and in the center, the body of Bambi, curiously peaceful in its loose-limbed, sprawling repose. The Hindu's work was finished.

In the window, his hand still clasping the knife with which he had dealt the treacherous upward stroke, stood Karl. He gazed down upon his work with a speculative eye. Battered almost beyond recognition, he had not escaped an easy victor. His blood lust had been sated: he felt weak and nauseated. With a grunt he let the knife fall from his fingers and stretched out a groping hand for the support of a chair. As he did so, his eye fell upon Enid Collingwood trying to slip away unobserved. The sight of her roused a demon in him. Here was the cause of all the trouble—a cringing, pussy-footing woman. With a roar of rage, he dashed the chair out of his path and lunged for her.

She saw his intention just in time and sprang aside. He missed her and came to his knees with the force of his onslaught. Immediately she realized that she had only to keep her wits about her and she need not fear him. Half-blinded by his injuries, weakened by the grilling battle he had come through, he was on the point of collapse. But he made a game effort to come back. He staggered to his feet and rushed again. She darted this way and that, confusing him by her speed. The overturned furniture made barriers between them. His progress grew more labored—his breath a greater effort. Like a tortured bull in the arena, he paused, uncertain which way to turn. As he hesitated there came an unexpected interruption. A hand brushed aside the portiéres.

Framed in the doorway stood a tall, emaciated form.

Enid, expecting to see Hennesy, looked up. Her heart was racing with the excitement of the last few hours, her nerves were strained to the breaking-point. For a moment she stood staring at the newcomer, then with a queer grimace crumpled in a heap to the floor.

Karl, as he saw her go, wheeled, his hand reaching for his automatic. The face in the doorway appeared to him through a gathering mist. With an oath he brushed his palm across his eyes. The mist lifted. Deliberately he raised the weapon and fired.

AT TEN minutes to seven, a raspberry-colored car slowed down to a suspiciously innocent fifteen miles an hour, glided by the traffic policeman in Jamaica and stopped in front of Gus Terry's all-night garage.

Out of the car stepped Jerry Knox. He called to a young man who was busily washing down the chassis of a mud-bespattered sedan.

"Let's have some gas, Jack," he requested as the young man laid down his sponge and approached. "Give her all she'll take." Then with one eye on the register: "You didn't happen to see anything this morning of a big car with two oldish-looking men in it, did you?"

The mechanic looked up.

"Yes sir, I did. A car stopped here about half an hour ago for some oil. At this season of the year there's so little doing you remember a stray dog if it wags its tail. This is a slow dump, nothing but funerals and movies, not even——"

"About this car now," Jerry interposed hastily. "You were saying——"

"I was just going to say—" a little sharply—"that there were two middling-old men in it and a chauffeur. I didn't notice the men much, except that one of them had sideburns—trick whiskers like fringe all down the sides of his map. But they had a swell car."

"Such as?"

"A Ryerson Six, royal blue, with lots of brass work."

"And the engine?"

The mechanic pursed an appraising lip.

"Good for fifty easy—seventy, if you don't care what happens to you."

Jerry nodded. "I guess they won't do any fifty miles on these roads."

"That's what I told them. The cops are as busy as cooties down here lately—nabbed twenty-eight last Sunday." Then pointing to the gasoline tank, "Twelve is all she'll hold this morning."

Jerry took a bill from his case.

"Did they happen to mention which road they were taking? No, that's all right," waving away a handful of change.

The mechanic grinned. "About the road, they didn't say, sir. But the chauffeur—looked like a wop—wanted to know where the Merrick road was."

Jerry climbed back into the car and started the engine.

"South side road pretty fair?"

"Well, they're repairing it from here to Babylon—three or four detours. But," with another grin, "I didn't tell 'em that. Thought they could find it out for themselves."

At the first cross-road Jerry headed north. As it took the curve, the small figure at his side sat up, pulled off cap and goggles and shook to the breeze a mane of crisp, yellow curls.

"There," said the Princess Ottilie, "now my poor face can breathe. I couldn't stand those stuffy things a minute longer. Why are we turning this way, Mr. Jerry, please?"

Skilfully Jerry avoided a bad spot in the road. His jaw was set, his eyes eagle-keen under puckered brows; but he relaxed sufficiently to smile down on his companion.

The last hour had cemented a friendship that might, under ordinary circumstances, have taken months of calls and dances, tiffs and reconciliations.

Out of the vastness of space this girl, a stranger from a strange land, a princess and a fugitive, whose manners, customs, language even, were so different from his own, had found her way into his life. Yesterday she had not been a part of the scheme of things. To-day he felt that he had known her always—known the gold of hair, the lilt of voice, the trick of eyes that looked up into his with so much understanding.

Pep was Jerry's middle name, thrills his breakfast-food. The Princess Ottilie was the first person he had ever met who could play the game as he played it and go him one better. He wondered what his family, his straight-laced, unimaginative family, would say to her—how they would take her whirlwind descriptions of the things she had seen and done in her own and other European countries.

The majority of her escapades were amusing—the pranks of a high-spirited child. A few struck him as pitiful. He read between the lines and realized her innocence—the great loneliness of the last five years. In spite of her assertions to the contrary, she was afraid of her Uncle Waldemar and his henchman, Karl. Their treatment of her made his blood boil and he began to look forward with a grim sort of pleasure to meeting them at the journey's end. This rascally old duke would have some explaining to do.

A touch on his arm roused him from his abstraction. Ottilie repeated her question.

"Why are we turning this way?"

Jerry tried to explain the hastily formed plan he had in mind. "You heard what that chap back there said?"

She nodded.

"Well, I'm going to try to head them off. They've got a good half-hour's start and a corking car; but at every town they'll have to come down to fifteen miles an hour or run the risk of being pinched. Besides there are those detours. I know what that means on Long Island—two or three miles out of your way on a punk road. The Motor Parkway is our one best bet, and I'm headed for it."

"The Motor Parkway, what is that?" The princess was hungry for details.

"It's a straightaway down the center of the island for about fifty miles. There's a theoretical speed-limit of forty-five an hour, but if you want to try a little more there's no one to stop you."

"But," Ottilie interrupted, "why didn't the others take this road if it's so good?"

Jerry slackened his speed as he saw a grade-crossing just ahead. "From what our friend at the garage said, they have a green chauffeur—probably some one in your own outfit, pressed into duty at the last moment. How about it?"

"Yes, yes! of course. It's Alexis," she answered. "He valets for my uncle and for Karl, and does many things for us all. He can drive. I've seen him; but I think he would not be called a *safe* driver!"

"Good! Just as I thought. In all probability Mr. Edgar is wise to this boy, Alexis, and prefers to keep to the south-side road where there won't be a chance to hit it up. He values his own neck, and, says he to himself, 'An hour or two won't make any difference.' You don't want to forget that they have no idea that we are on their trail. They think I am locked up in a two-by-six jail and that you are probably off sulking in some hotel. Here we are now," as they stopped before a small white toll-house. "They make you pay for the privilege of risking your neck. It's a great little burg, Long Island."

A minute later they swept out into the stretch that led in a flat, straight line to Ronkonkoma, half-way down the island. The road slid beneath them with dizzying rapidity—the race was on.

THERE was little chance for conversation; the wind whipped their words away before they had uttered them. The princess, her eye on the speedometer, saw the little needle travel from thirty-five to forty and then on to fifty, where it settled itself. A glorious feeling of detachment came to her—her untamed spirit was winging forward unhampered into space. With tense fingers she gripped the red-leather upholstery. It was an anchor to windward, a reminder that she was a flesh-and-blood person.

Once Jerry shouted:

"This was a part of the Vanderbilt Cup course." And she nodded her head without understanding what he meant. He might have told her that it was a part of the Milky Way and she would have believed him. It seemed to her that she could go on forever thus, the wind in her face, this man by her side.

Not once did they overtake a car headed east. Whatever traffic there was all seemed to come from the opposite direction. Now and then a big machine was snuffed by them with a roar; but for the most part they had the road to themselves.

At last, and all too soon for the girl, their speed began to slacken; Jerry was looking to right and left with anxious eyes.

"It's a dog's age since I last hit this trail," he said in answer to a question in the eyes of the princess; "but it's all right now," pointing to a sign-post, "we're about there." He glanced at the clock. "Eight-fifteen! Well, how'd you enjoy it?"

Ottilie clasped her hands.

"Oh, it was wonderful—wonderful! I wish we could go on for hours and hours."

"We might have to stop for a little gas or some food," he said teasingly. "After all, I'm human, even if you are a princess."

She made a moue of disclaimer. She too was human, she would have him to know. And then with an eager gesticulation she pointed to the road ahead.

"What place is that?"

He followed the direction of her gaze and saw, through a veil of interlacing branches, the outlines of a white stucco building.

"That, my dear Miss Princess," he replied, "is a rattling good inn. We turn here for the south side. And the great question before us now is"—he swung off into a side road bordered by freshly plowed fields—"have we or have we not?"

"Have we not what?"

"Beaten them to it. From now on we'll have to follow a frequented road too, and it's doubtful if we could overhaul them. However," with a shrug, "that's on the lap of the gods. They've been good to us so far and we'll just plug along and trust them and our friend here to do the rest." He patted the wheel affectionately. "See," he added, "we are getting back into civilization. Better put on your cap and goggles. No telling whom we might meet. On a jaunt like this it pays to be careful."

A mile or two farther on the raspberry-colored car swung into the main street of a pretty village. Already the sun had the warmth of midsummer. The children on their way to school had shed hats and coats and were frolicking like lambs loosed in a pasture. Jerry laughed in sympathy.

"It's good to be alive on a day like this. Don't you——"

The words died on his lips. His hand gripped the arm of the princess. "Look!"

She followed the direction of his gaze and saw, standing before a roadhouse, a bright blue touring car.

"Dollars to doughnuts that's it," he whispered in her ear. "I wonder if I dare go over and reconnoiter?"

They slid in under an elm-tree and came to a stop. Jerry looked longingly at the brass-trimmed enemy. It sparkled with aggravating efficiency. There was no suggestion of hard driving upon its sleek sides. It looked fit for a thousand miles.

"They're in there eating," he groaned, "and us starving. I'd give ten years of my life for a chance to punch a few holes in those bloated tires. That would give them something to think about besides their stomachs."

"Well," the princess raised an inquiring shoulder, "why don't you? It would be quite simple. I can help you. Better still, I can do it. You go to ask some question at the office—I to admire the beautiful car. No one notices me and—" a suggestive downward stroke with one hand—"it is done in the twinkling of an eye with a pocket-knife."

Jerry looked at her admiringly.

"On my soul, I believe you'd do it, and get away with it too. But it's too risky; and besides it's not ethical. It's—" From under her long lashes the princess was eying him expectantly—"it's—oh, hang it all! I can't explain it to you. We'd better be getting on. At least we shall have the lead and we must try to keep it."

He threw in the clutch. Once more the car sprang forward.

FROM now on the race depended on the driving. And no one could deny Jerry the title of "master driver." With consummate skill he avoided the rough places, kept within limits as the towns were reached and gave the engine its head on the strips between. Never once did he forget the danger from those swift olive-drab units of the law mounted on motor-cycles who lurked in by-paths to surprise the speed-fiend and who dealt out punishment in the form of crisp pink slips that invariably meant a summons for the morning. He was prepared to collect a few of those slips if necessary, but he preferred to keep out of the hands of the police as long as possible, and besides even a minute's delay might mean the loss of the lead.

He was just congratulating himself that the worst part of the ride was over when, as they topped a slight rise in ground, a tire blew out with a loud and ostentatious bang. A crow, perching on the shoulder of a dummy in a near-by wheat-field, croaked a disconsolate echo. The raspberry-colored car drifted to the lee side of the road and stopped. Without a word Jerry climbed out to investigate the damage.

The princess, leaning at a perilous angle over the back, watched him anxiously.

"What's the trouble?" she inquired.

"Glass," he responded laconically. "The tire on this side is cut to pieces and the one on the other side doesn't look any too good. I'd like to get a-hold of the rube who threw his beer bottle in this road. I'd wring his neck. There's nothing in the world that'll get you as quick as glass."

"How long will it take to fix it?"

"Fifteen minutes if I hustle."

The Princess Ottilie dropped back in her seat. All the sunshine had gone out of the day. Her eyes wandered forlornly over the landscape. Suddenly she sat up again.

"I think I see violets over there. Will I have time to pick some?"

"Oodles!" whimsically. "You might pick a wreath for me. I think I'll need one presently."

He watched her scramble out of the car and climb the fence, and with a shrug turned back to his task. Women were funny things: with a life at stake they could think about picking a few measly violets. Why in thunder hadn't she seemed more interested in the tire! She could at least have offered to lend a hand. He jacked up the axle.

FOR the next fifteen minutes he toiled frantically. Even the defection of the princess was forgotten while he juggled monkey-wrenches and pliers. For some reason the shoe refused to slip into place. The rim was out of true. He gritted his teeth and hurled mental anathemas at Tohari, who had been the last one to change a tire. At last it was accomplished. As he straightened his back and wiped the drops of perspiration from his forehead, he saw the figure of the princess flying toward him along the road. She threw something from her—the violets he supposed—and raised her voice in warning.

"They are coming! Quick, they are coming. I saw them from the old barn over there." She stumbled to the car panting.

He helped her into place and slid into his seat. Already the roar of the approaching car drowned every other sound. It spoke of power and speed. The great blue-and-gold dragon was almost upon them. As it breasted the slope there was a report like an exploding hand-grenade and it careened from one side of the road to the other. Fifty feet away it came to a stop.

Ottilie sprang up with a cry of triumph. The cry was echoed from the disabled car. A man leaned forward, gesticulating wildly. Without ceremony Jerry caught the girl by the hem of her skirt and jerked her hurriedly to her seat.

"Sit down, for heaven's sake! They'll see you."

The warning came too late.

The man had jumped from the machine and was running toward them, calling the girl by name as he came.

It was the Duke Waldemar!

"Here's hoping that that tire doesn't fly off and send us to Kingdom Come," Jerry murmured fervently, and threw the clutch into high.

The little roadster leaped forward and the figure of the duke receded until it was a mere girating speck in the middle distance. Knox turned to the girl and spoke soberly.

"That squeak was too close to suit me. If it hadn't been for that bit of glass playing them the same dirty trick that it played us, we might have been—" A vision of the princess coming up the dusty road suddenly blotted out all other impressions. He paused. "It *was* the same piece of glass, wasn't it? What was that you were throwing away just before their car came in sight?"

Ottilie smiled complacently.

"It was more glass, a great deal more, Mr. Jerry. I found ever so many bottles and jars behind that old barn. They had lovely sharp points that stood right up straight. One piece was——"

Jerry whistled.

"So that was what you were up to? And I thought you were picking violets!" He put his foot on the gas and watched the needle climb to forty-five. "I'd hate to have you get 'down' on me, Miss Princess. I'm glad I've got you on my side. Only now that they've recognized us and probably caught on to the reason for their wrecked tires, we may expect to look for squalls ahead. Keep your eyes open for those motor cops. I'm not going to stop now for anybody even if I have to spend the next ten years in jail. Hold fast."

A town spun by, a blurred impression of wrathful shouts and waving arms. Dogs barked, but kept their distance. Chickens flapped their wings and scuttled to the ditches for shelter. A cow which had been placidly chewing her cud beside the road threw up her head and, bellowing panic, lumbered down the street, the long tethering rope dragging at her heels.

Once more the open country. Flat sand dunes, now, scrub oaks and the smell of the sea. Jerry's eyes never left the middle of the road. One swerve and they would be gone. No Vanderbilt Cup racer ever jockeyed his machine to better advantage. Another town, and then another. Still no mishap. He began to get overconfident. As the next cluster of houses appeared, he decided that they had eluded pursuit and could afford a breathing-space. He slowed down for a dangerous curve, and turned to the princess.

"It's clinched. From now on—" He threw on his brakes.

A large detour sign stared him in the face. Not until he had brought the raspberry-colored car to a standstill did he realize that he had fallen into an ambuscade.

From the side of the road a flivver, hoary with age, rattled forward. A tall, thin bay-man in shirt sleeves and yachting cap raised a warning hand and shouted:

"Yer might as well stop an' keep stoppin'. It's high time yer capers was brought to an end. What d'yer think this road is—a roller coaster?"

"Who are *you?*" demanded Jerry truculently. His nerves were tricky and he felt that it would not be difficult to pick a fight with almost anybody. "What right have you got to stop me?"

"I'm the deputy sheriff. And if you think you kin go through these towns, hell-bent, the way you've been adoin', then you've got another think comin' to yer. You just follow me now, and don't try any monkey shines, because I've got a gun—see?"

Jerry saw. His experience with the Long Island conscience made him wary about trying to break for freedom. As they pottered down the main street, he had plenty of time for reflection. Even a short delay was going to put a crimp in his plans. He had no right to keep silent any longer. His mind once made up, he could scarcely wait for the car to come to a standstill.

"I say," he commenced, "you mustn't hold me. I've got to get to the end of the island right away. It's a question of life or death. I——"

"Go on," prompted the deputy, "tell me next you're a doctor. That's what they all say."

"I'm not a doctor," snapped Jerry, "and I'm not lying to you, either. If you won't let me go, then for the love of Mike get busy and send some one down to Mr. Willard Edgar's house at Brockhampton. They've got a woman there and—" He launched into the story of Enid Collingwood's abduction. It had a fishy sound. His own ears warned him of its inconsistencies. Told to such an unsympathetic listener it outclassed the Baron Munchausen's best. He hitched nervously at his collar, stammered, hesitated.

The deputy wagged his head, a knowing leer on his lip.

"Ah, roll over," he said. "You're talkin' in yer sleep." And then bruskly: "I've heard enough of that rot. Climb out of that car. Come, get busy."

Fuming, Jerry obeyed. At the curb he paused.

"What place is this you're taking me to?"

A big bony hand pointed upward.

"Cain't yer read?"

Jerry followed the hand. In gold letters on a neat black sign he read:

Engine Company No. 1

"What are you going to do—turn the hose on me?" he inquired caustically.

"I'm goin' ta keep yer here until the sheriff gits through eatin'."

"Eating? God help us! What's he eating at this time of day? It's too late for breakfast and too early for luncheon."

"Don't git funny," was the brief admonition.

Inside the building, the fire-fighting outfit stood shrouded in tarpaulins.

"Not much use for 'em," volunteered the bay-man. "This town is so blamed safe, we never git no fires."

The Princess Ottilie started. It was the same complaint the mechanic back in the garage at Jamaica had made. Long Island, like every other place, needed an occasional jazzing up.

"This way!" The man threw open a door

that led into a small room, fitted up like an office. "You might as well be restin' yer hands and feet while yer waitin'. Set down."

Jerry accepted the invitation and dropped into a chair. He was in no mood for conversation, but the deputy still lingered.

"Where's yer friend?" the man asked at last.

Knox looked around—Ottilie was no where to be seen.

"Oh, I don't know," he said carelessly. "What difference does it make? You've got me and the car. Isn't that enough?"

"Looks like it would have ter be."

JERRY grunted. The chair was stiff-backed and hard—the atmosphere torrid. The ticking of a clock and the rhythmic crunch of the deputy's jaws were the only sounds that broke the stillness. Minutes went by—still no sheriff. He got up and paced the floor.

"Say, look here." Jerry paused before the chair which the deputy had tipped back against the wall. "I doubt if you are acting within your rights to hold me all this time. I'm willing to pay my fine——"

"Tell that to the judge over at Riverhead. He——"

"Riverhead? What's the idea?"

"You been athrowin' glass on the public highway and——"

"So, that's the game, is it? Well, where's your warrant?"

The man saw his mistake.

"I ain't took you in jest fer that," he disclaimed hastily. "I pinched you fer speedin'. I don't have ter have no warrant fer that."

Jerry gritted his teeth. The trap had been effectually sprung. They could——

"FIRE! FIRE!"

The deputy dropped his chair to the floor and sprang to his feet.

"A fire—a fire at last!" he cried. "I got to sound the alarm." His eye caught the expression on the face of his prisoner—the door slammed—the key clicked in the lock.

"Well, I'll be ——" Jerry's cap went spinning across the floor in a futile effort to express his chagrin.

Outside was pandemonium. Feet tramped—wheels creaked—fifty tongues out-bedlamed Bedlam. The lusty peel of the fire-gong added to the racket.

Knox dropped his head into his hands and waited until the clamor had taken itself off up street and died into the distance. Then he rose and surveyed his prison.

The one window was effectually guarded by bars of iron.

"Oh, to be a Houdini," he thought as he tested their strength. They were as firm-rooted as the Equitable Building. As he despondently returned to his seat, the door opened an inch or two and the eager face of the Princess Ottilie appeared in the aperture. Smudges of grease and soot had almost obliterated the satin pink of the cheeks, the perky uplift of the nose. A thin trickle of blood was working a ridge down one grimy temple.

Jerry's jaw dropped, but a stamp of her foot warned him that there was no time for explanations.

"Hurry," she urged. "There's not a minute to lose—they will be back directly. Quick!"

They hustled from the engine-house, through a patch of woods. She led him to the outskirts of the village. From a distance the sounds of the firemen at their work came to them on the breeze.

"What about the car?" demanded Jerry.

Ottilie shook her head impatiently.

"Car's no use to us. Every one knows it by this time. I've got something better."

From a hedge she dragged a motor-cycle with a side car.

"Princess," Knox cried, "you're a wonder. Where did you get it?"

Ottilie was busy tucking herself into the side car. "I borrowed it from a garage up the street. The man'll never miss it—he had so many."

Jerry swallowed — tried to speak — choked—gave it up. The *sfit sfit* of the engine told him they were on their way.

As they left the town behind them, he took a good look at the culprit. Her shoes were muddy—her stockings torn—the green-and-gold party dress a forlorn drabble of shreds and tatters. Even the theft of a motor-cycle could not account for such wreckage.

"Where," he asked sternly, "is the coat you were wearing when I last saw you?"

Out of the dirty face a pair of yellow eyes looked up in a pathetic attempt to be conciliatory. "I used it to start the fire with. You see, I wanted smoke—a great deal of smoke, and there was nothing to——"

"*What?*"

The motor-cycle narrowly escaped a collision with a tree. The princess hastened to explain.

"Oh, you needn't be worried. It was not a good barn—in fact it was old. There were holes in it in a great many places. It was quite all right to burn it except for the silly cow. I couldn't make her get out and she did this to me—and this—pointing to her forehead and dress. "I had to get behind her and shove before——"

The groan that burst from Jerry's lips must have started in his shoes.

"Lord! I see our finish. We've committed every crime on the calendar and some that were never thought of before. Speeding, assaulting a cow, larceny, arson—All we've got to do is a little murdering and there's nothing left. When that deputy——"

The rest was lost in the jolting of the motor-cycle. For a mile or two they traveled on in silence—each turning over in his mind the events of the last few hours—and their probable outcome. At last a fork in the road demanded a decision. The machine came to a grinding halt.

"Whither away now?" speculated Mr. Knox.

"There's a house over there. You might ask." Ottilie pointed to a small shack at some distance from the road.

Jerry looked to right and left. Nothing else in sight but hummocks of sand and a discouraged growth of pines and huckleberry bushes. The sun had hidden its face—the spot was a desert.

He sprang to the ground, crossed the road and made his way to the shack. The door was locked. He knocked and waited. Suddenly he heard the racket of a motor-cycle. He wheeled, but the house cut off his view of the road. He dashed for the gate, caught his toe in a snarl of dead Virginia creeper vines and went headlong. When he picked himself up, the road was deserted—the motor-cycle and the Princess Ottilie had disappeared.

Jerry sat down on an uprooted tree-stump and ran a hand through his hair. "Talk about your wild, wild women," he muttered glumly.

A drop of rain and the ominous growl of thunder brought him out of his daze. He staggered to his feet.

The going was heavy, the road a foot deep in beach sand, overhead a black and treacherous sky. From the sea came the sough of a cold wet wind.

At the end of the first half-mile he found the motor-cycle. Standing there in the ditch it told its own story. A little farther on the tracks of a heavy automobile left no doubt as to what had become of the princess. For several feet in all directions the ground had been plowed up. She had not submitted tamely to capture. There had been a struggle—possibly every man in the Edgar car had had a hand in it.

Jerry ground his teeth and dragged the motor-cycle out of the ditch. He started the engine thrumming and sprang into the saddle. As he did so a burst of rain lashed across his face.

The storm had broken in good earnest.

LIKE an arch-fiend bent on destruction, he shot away, his engine spluttering. Could he overtake them before they reached the house, and if he did—what then?

With maddening intricacy, the road took to dipping in a series of short hills. On each up grade he strained his eyes, hoping for a glimpse of the fugitive car; every down grade he took with dizzy speed, the empty seat at his side crying to him, "faster—faster." It was no longer Enid Collingwood that he was thinking of, but Ottilie—the Princess Ottilie. It was she who had need of him.

Spattered with mud, drenched with rain, he reached the last hill. From its crest he saw a bit of Eden—a fairy-land created by the hand of man where Nature had decreed a waste place. The house on the rocks, the gardens putting on their April green, the hedges, the miniature lake—all, he knew, were a part of the Edgar estate. Bellaires in all its beauty lay before him.

With a shout he charged down the slope. Midway in the descent he saw something that made him grip the handle-bars. The motor-cycle swerved to the right and came to a stop.

On its side in the ditch lay all that was left of the blue touring car. A splintered telegraph pole showed the spot where its career had been cut short.

Slowly Jerry dismounted and approached the wreck. Would he find the broken body of the princess among that confusion of leather and metal? The thought made a coward of him. He wished himself miles away. Some one else should have played the rôle of rescuer—some one who could have been cool and impersonal.

He cried, "Ottilie! Ottilie!" and waited. There was no answer.

Warily he skirted the spot, his eyes alert for the first sign of movement. To his surprise he saw no one. It seemed incredible that all the passengers of that ill-fated car should have escaped; yet that apparently was just what had happened. The reaction made his knees wobble—a mist hung on his lashes. He dashed a hand across his eyes.

The Lord be praised! Ottilie was not a part of the wreckage that lay strewn about his feet. But where was she? What had happened in that half-hour interval since she had left him? The ivy-covered gateway of Bellaires beckoned. Behind those walls he would find the answer to his question. The thought roused him to action and he started forward.

As he did so he heard a groan coming from somewhere close at hand. His fears returned. There was a victim—more than one perhaps. He leaped to the heap of débris and began to dig, his fingers clawing at the twisted wood and steel that once had been the front of the machine. There under the steering-wheel lay a huddled form.

It was Mr. Willard Edgar!

It took only a glance to show that his condition was desperate. The full weight of the chassis was upon him. From the waist down he was pinned to the road. It would be impossible to free him without help.

Jerry looked about him. It seemed inhuman to go and yet— He turned longingly toward the house—how could he be expected to stay?

There was a stir in the limp body—the man was coming back to consciousness. His lips moved.

"I'm done for." The words came in a broken whisper. "This is the end."

Jerry dropped to his knees in the slimy road-bed.

"No you're not." He pulled off his coat to make a pillow. "Try to buck up. I'll have help here in a jiffy, and once this mess is lifted, you'll be all right."

Mr. Edgar moved his head in feeble negation, and then as Jerry started to go:

"Don't leave me. There's something—I want to say before—before——"

Knox bent closer, his ears strained to catch the halting murmur. It was a strange story, broken by long pauses, colored by half-delirious imaginings. Yet it transported its listener from the flat, wind-swept road to the hilly country of Marania, beyond the Adriatic. He caught the glitter of court life, its sordid intrigues, the assassination of Prince Ferdinand Adolphus—the hateful treachery of it. Involuntarily he shrank from the stricken man. Then he caught a word that made him forget all that had gone before.

"What's that?" he cried.

Edgar mumbled on, but Jerry said with exasperated eagerness:

"I mean the part about the airplane wreck down here on your beach at Bellaires." It was hard to be patient; but at last he succeeded in making Edgar understand. "That's it," he urged, "go on—this man who drove the machine—what was his name—where is he now?" The voice died away. "Come, once more—just one more try. You say your man, Bambi, recognized him as the student who had come to the assistance of this prince—this Maranian chap. His name, man, for God's sake—his name!"

There was no answer. The little ambassador was very still.

Jerry staggered to his feet. His face was white, his jaws set. Overhead the sun was trying to break through the clouds. The storm was about over. He sloshed down the road, through the puddles, heedless of the mud that splashed him from head to foot.

THE gate to Bellaires was open, the doors unlocked. There was no one to bar his passage. He passed to the great entrance-hall and stopped.

A man was sitting on a low settle, one hand nursing a damaged eye. He looked up as Knox entered and smiled a crooked smile.

"What, some more?" was his greeting. "Come on in. Don't mind me. This is our busy day."

"Who are you?" demanded Jerry.

"Who, me?" The man, Hennesy, stood up. "I'm the Lord Mayor of Lunnon; but I condescends to drive a car for 'His Nibs'—Willard Edgar."

The words struck flippantly.

"Be still! Your master is lying dead—out in the road. Where is the princess—and the others?"

Hennesy, somewhat sobered, answered as respectfully as he knew how.

"If you mean them foreigners, they've all went." Jerry groaned hopelessly. "Swiped the limousine and beat it by the back road to the north side. Some bunch, I'll tell the world! Is that straight about the boss? Anything I kin do?"

"You'd better go down and stay by Mr. Edgar's body until I can get help. Where's Bambi?" The news that the foreigners had gone was a terrible blow. He wondered if the Princess Ottilie had left any message for him, if she——

Hennesy recalled him to his question. He had crossed to a doorway and was holding aside the heavy hangings.

"If you want to see Bambi, give a look. It won't cost you nothing."

Jerry came to the door and glanced into the room. The look of inquiry in his eyes was answered by the chauffeur.

"Some scrap, I'm tellin' you—some scrap." In his syncopated English he plunged into a detailed account of what he knew of the affair since leaving the Edgar house in New York at one o'clock that morning.

When he paused for breath, Knox said, "How long have you known there was a man locked up in this house?"

"Only since we got down here. Only I kinda tumbled that there was some reason for Bambi staying here all winter. I ast him about it and he went off—blooey! so I shut up. I wasn't taking no chances with that heathen. But I made up my mind I would find out before I left. I heard queer noises in one of the rooms and a little after that there was a yell—say, Mister, that yell fair had me goin'. Bambi beat it up-stairs—I think he tied up things so there couldn't be no more sounds, but—when the fightin' commenced, the guy in the room got wise. He worked part way loose and then— But I told you the rest. Take it from me, though, if it hadn't 'a' been for that little tatar—the one they calls the princess—he'd have had his face shot off. She nipped it right in through that pantry door just as the Dutchman raised his gun and slashed his arm with a riding-whip she'd found somewheres, and when he gave up she commenced to jabber in her own lingo. She laid down the law, I tell you. Karl, he was all in, any way. He didn't have a word to say. And then the old gink shows up—Duke What-d'yer-call-him. He let the duke and the princess help him away—they both still havin' it out hot and heavy and that was the last I seen of any of 'em. But the limousine's gone and the gate to the park on the north side is wide open. That's how they got away all right—all right."

Jerry nodded that he understood. The chauffeur's story had ceased to interest him—the princess was gone.

"And the other two," he asked after a moment, "where are they?"

"Outside somewhere. Say, Mister, when that big soldier feller saw her lying cold and stiff on the floor, like she was dead, he took on somethin' terrible. Gee, you'd think he——"

Jerry waved the rest away. With a quick stride he crossed the room and stepped out through the long French windows. The storm had passed over.

HE SAW them—locked in an embrace so close that the shadows they cast on the golden bricks of the terrace behind them fell as one. A modern miracle. Keith Collingwood restored to life and—love. Loath to disturb their perfect harmony, he waited. After all, what part had he in all this happiness? It was their moment and theirs alone—the compensation for the months of separation, the fears, the heart-aches. He was only the instrument. His little stunt was done. It was time for him to fade out of the picture. Dully he wondered whether Ottilie would ever think of him.

The reaction had come—exhaustion after a grilling twenty-four hours, disappointment, disillusion. Jerry was down in the dumps. But as he turned to slip away, they spied him, and whatever doubts he might have had as to his reception vanished.

"*Keith!*"—"*Jerry!*" The cries were simultaneous.

There was a lump in the throat of each and to cover it they behaved like two bear cubs. They clapped each other on the back, touseled each other's heads, made rough, playful feints at an exposed ear or chin. It was a soul-gripping reunion.

And then came questions, one tumbling on the heels of another.

At last Enid interposed, despairing hands to her ears.

"Oh, begin at the beginning, you'll never get any where the way you're going on."

They took her advice. But it required time—this, straightening out of the snarl into which their lives had been tangled. There were questions that went unanswered and answers that were blurted out before the questions had been put, and in the end some of it was still chaotic; but they managed to pool their knowledge until a fairly satisfactory result was reached.

"Tell me," said Keith in one of the pauses, "how was it you didn't show Enid my letter? Owing to the fact that my body had never been found, I thought the letter might give her a hint that I was still in the land of the living."

"That," returned Jerry humbly, "was because I happen to be the biggest idiot outside of Matteawan. I thought the letter would make her unhappy, give her the blues and all that sort of thing. I see now what an ass I've been." A long arm in faded khaki slipped over his shoulder. A familiar grip made him conscious again of that lump in his throat. He hastened to cover his embarrassment. "Tell me something. Why didn't you write to Mrs Collingwood instead of to me? That would have relieved her mind right away."

"The point is well taken, Jerry, my son; but unfortunately friend Bambi only consented to letting me write when he found that I was not making any attempt to disclose my earthly existence or present whereabouts. He was a queer combination of good and evil, Bambi; but as mad as a March hare. After I had pretty well worn him down with worrying about my wife, he consented to go to New York and look her up. I promised to remain quiet while he went, but he took the precaution of tying me hand and foot just the same. When he came back, what he had to tell me about Enid's changed circumstances nearly drove me crazy. Shortly after that he concocted the scheme about the letter—it was all his idea, especially the mystic thrills which he seemed to consider made it quite safe. He promised to carry it to some friend who would be willing to help Mrs. Collingwood, but would not attempt to find out where the letter came from. Then I thought of you. I'm afraid—"with a grin—"you would not have been complimented if you had heard how I described you—a writing chap—a bit thick. I let him understand that you'd probably send Enid a couple of hundred dollars and then forget all about it. He fell for it and—here I am."

Jerry proffered a light.

"By the way, what kind of ink was that your precious friend used for his mysterious communications? If I hadn't received it just when I did, there wouldn't have been anything to read—it's all gone by now."

Collingwood threw back his head and laughed.

"Bambi, poor old humbug, said it was a liquid sacred to the priest of Siva; but I suspect it was some of those trick inks used by the European secret service. If it fades out, I believe you can restore it by baking."

Jerry flicked away a bit of ash from his sleeve. "There's just one point which isn't clear in my mind yet—if you ever had any intention of exposing Mr. Edgar, why didn't you do it long ago?"

Keith gave a slow reminiscent smile.

"That," a little grimly, "is where the well-known irony of Fate comes in. Until Bambi dragged me out of the surf and carried me to Bellaires, I hadn't the faintest idea who the men were that I had seen that night in Marania, five years ago. I was feeling—well, a bit glorious that night, and I couldn't trust my eyesight. Afterward I realized that I had come on a nasty mess, and I held my tongue for policy's sake."

JERRY whistled. He was thinking of the dead man back there in the road, of the fear that had driven him on to his death, of the misguided, wasted life—and of a little girl with whom Fate had suddenly gladdened his own life only to snatch her away again. After a minute he said, a trifle sadly: "It's time I got on the job again. There is a good deal to be done here. I——"

"Look!" Enid Collingwood sprang to her feet. Both men followed suit.

Slowly, through the wet hedges, was coming the bedraggled figure of the Princess Ottilie.

Jerry cleared the steps as though the sodden pumps on his feet had been the winged slippers of Mercury.

"Ottilie!" he cried.

She put out her arms to him like a tired child. Her lip was trembling.

He caught her to him. The depression of a moment before was gone. His heart was singing. She had come back—this infinitely precious little companion. His lips brushed the shining tangle of her hair.

"Oh, my dear—my very dear," he murmured brokenly, "I thought I had lost you. They told me you had gone."

From the shelter of his arms she looked up. "And did you care?" The mischievous glint had come back to her eyes.

"Care?" He gave her a gentle shake. "I've had the fiercest half-hour of my life. Hennesy told me you had left with the duke and Karl. I thought of course you hadn't any further use for me—that you were going back to your own kingdom. I knew that you were a princess and——"

She stopped him—the tips of her fingers on his lips.

"Don't say it—don't. I'm not a princess any longer. They—my uncle and Karl—deceived me as they did everybody else. Marania is no longer a separate country—it has become a part of Bulgaria, and I'm plain Ottilie Von Eisen. I was brought here for the sole purpose of extorting money from Mr. Edgar. They told him that they meant to start a revolution and put me on the throne to rule as my father had done. But my uncle knew that that was impossible, that such a revolution was bound to fail. And now that they have finished with Mr. Edgar—well"—a characteristic shrug—"my uncle has no further use for me. He has gone now—I will never see him again. He was glad, I think, to see the last of me." Her voice broke. "I have been waiting in the garden ever since."

Jerry held her off at arm's length. What she had just told him put them on an equal footing. There could be nothing now to stand between them.

"Ottilie," he said, "I haven't much of a kingdom to offer you, but if you will accept it—" He crushed her to him in another long embrace.

After a minute they remembered the Collingwoods, but when they went in search of them the terrace was deserted. They had gone to some other spot. The grounds were big enough for a dozen lovers.

Startled by a discreet cough, he looked up and saw a short, chunky man with round, restless eyes coming toward them.

"GOOD morning," said the man. "I'm Detective Pheeny. I came down on the ten-fifty to see what it was all about." Then pointing to the house: "Looks like Verdun—eh?"

Jerry seized his hand and gave it a hearty shake. "Pheeny," he cried, "you're just the man I was wishing for. If you'd come a minute sooner, you'd 'a' been too late."

"Quit your kidding," ventured the detective cautiously. "What's doing?"

Knox raised expressive shoulders.

"Everything under the sun. But you and I have got to put our heads together and see how much of it we can keep out of the papers for the sake of the Edgar family. The minute this bunch of rube constables get wise to what's in the wind, it'll be spread broadcast. We've got to move fast, too. They may be here any minute. I'm a wanted man—they're after me." He grinned. "Come along—I'll tell you about it."

As he linked his arm through that of the detective, Pheeny started and drew away. Enid Collingwood had just joined Ottilie at the foot of the garden.

"Christmas!" he exclaimed, pointing an excited finger. "There's that woman that had her bag stolen. I can tell her something that will interest her. We caught the thief as she was boarding the train for Chicago—at least I suppose it was the same one, Mitzi Ludoff, the princess." With a touch of finality. "There's only one princess——"

Jerry interrupted him with a ringing slap on the back.

"Pheeny," his voice was exultant, "you said something that time—you *certainly* said something. There's only one princess. Take my word for it—only *one*."

The Rider of Golden Bar*

The District Attorney Finds it Healthy to Release Hazel from Jail, and the Sheriff Discovers New Evidence, the Results of the Man-Hunt for Dan Slike

By William Patterson White

Author of "Paradise Bend," "Hidden Trails," "Lynch Lawyers," etc.

Illustrations by Remington Schuyler

LIFE was not a bed of roses for the gentlemen who controlled the political activities of Crocker County. Billy Wingo, their hand-picked sheriff, was not behaving at all in the manner in which they confidently expected he would when they had him elected. He had run his unsuccessful opponent, Jack Murray, out of the country after that worthy, full of bad whisky and worse intentions, had attempted to assault Sally Jane Prescott. He had jailed Dan Slike, a professional gunman imported especially for the purpose of shooting him, for the murder of Tom Walton. In fact it had begun to look as if it would be a very lean year in the cattle-running business and certain other forms of quick and unlaborious gain.

Billy, however, was not having things his own way. He had quarreled with his betrothed, Hazel Walton, who refused to marry a man whose life was in constant danger. He was a fugitive from justice because Felix Craft, who held up the Hillsville stage, had thoughtfully dressed himself in the sheriff's clothes before carrying out that little exploit. There was also a warrant out for his arrest on the charge of shooting Tip O'Gorman.

The day after O'Gorman was shot and Billy had fled from the posse organized to catch the stage robber, a group of angry horsemen, headed by District Attorney Arthur Rale, rode out to the Walton ranch to investigate the reason why Hazel had bought a lot of supplies that morning. Hazel explained, as she carefully kept the men covered with her rifle, that she had bought those supplies for herself, that Billy wasn't in her house, she didn't know where he was and she didn't propose to have a lot of unauthorized men searching the place. Rale and his men rode off considerably crestfallen.

Soon after they had gone, Dan Slike appeared in the doorway. It was not the purpose of those who hired him to have him brought to trial, so they sneaked him out of jail and pointed him in one direction while they led a posse in hot pursuit in the opposite. Hazel reached for her rifle, but Dan was too quick for her and promptly knocked her down. When she got up and showed fight he beat her and kicked her until she was too dazed to do anything but follow his commands. "I figure always to be as gentle with a woman as I can," said he. "Dontcha fret, I ain't got any time to fuss with any female." Then the gallant Mr. Slike insisted that she have supper with him. After he had eaten his fill, he gathered together all the supplies he could carry, took her hat, stuck the butcher knife in his bootleg and rode off on her horse.

Nothing had power to surprise her now, and when Rafe Tuckleton entered, she looked at him lifelessly. "You had Bill Wingo here," he accused, looking at the table. "We'll settle this Bill Wingo business right now. You see, don't you, how you can never marry a murderer?" His eyes, savage and mean, held hers steadily. "I'm taking you back with me to-night to my ranch. To-morrow you can marry me or not. It'll be just as you say." He caught her in his arms, and Hazel, realizing that the man was crazed with drink, kicked and thrashed about like a wild thing in a trap. With her last flare-up of failing

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strength, she kicked him in the kneecap. He jumped back and as his shoulders struck the wall, they knocked away the bracket that supported a large Terry clock. The clock fell. One corner struck him fairly on the temple and knocked him cold. Hazel took his six-shooter and when he came to, drove him from the house. She closed the door, dropped the bar into place and fell into the nearest chair.

"My God!" she said aloud, "I wonder what will happen next."

"I TELL you I ain't satisfied," nagged the district attorney.

"Say something new," growled that amiable person Felix Craft.

"If you fellers weren't blinded by a pretty face, you'd see it like I do."

"The girl said those cartridges were for her own personal use," pointed out Sam Larder, scratching a plump ear. "I believe that girl."

"You can't believe any girl most of the time," denied the district attorney.

"And where a girl's feller is concerned you can't believe her any of the time. Sam, can't you understand a girl will lie just for the fun of it, if she hasn't any other reason? It's female nature to act that way. You've got to take it into consideration and make allowances accordingly when dealing with a woman. You can't trust 'em, damn 'em, one li'l short inch."

"Be a Scotchman," advised Sam Larder, "and give her the benefit of the doubt."

"I'd like to give her a good swift week or two in jail," snarled the district attorney. "That would bring her to her senses. That would make her talk."

"Well, you can't do it," said Felix, weary of the argument. "So why waste your breath?"

"Tell you what I can do," said the district attorney, brightening with hope. "I can go out to Walton's and question her some more."

"Good Gawd, ain't you had enough ridin' for one day?" said Sam.

"I'm good for a li'l bit more."

"I didn't like to have that Slike jigger get off thataway," grumbled Sam Larder. "I'd like to see him hung, the lousy murderer! I wish we could have worked it some other way."

"There wasn't any other way," the district attorney hastened to assure him. "We couldn't risk having Slike tried. He'd have snitched on Rafe Tuckleton sure as fate. It was the only thing for us to do, and you know it."

Sam nodded. "I know, but—" He left the sentence unfinished.

"Now that we've got Dan out of the way," the district attorney pattered on, "we've got to glom onto Bill Wingo, and the sooner the quicker. Me, I'm going out to Walton's to-night and question Hazel some more. You boys don't have to go, you know. I can get hold of somebody, I guess."

"Suppose Bill Wingo is there, then what? We took a big bunch before and——"

"And got damwell laughed at by the whole town for our trouble," snapped Sam. "Serve us right. Wild goose chase anyway, and to-night will be another. C'mon, if you're goin'."

The moon was high in the heavens when the three men came to the mouth of the draw leading to the Walton ranch. A quarter-mile up this draw they came upon a man standing beside a horse. This man they surrounded immediately. He proved to be the town marshal, Red Herring, engaged in the prosaic business of tightening a slipped cinch.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the district attorney.

"Same thing you're doing," the marshal returned sulkily.

"It ain't necessary for you to be watching the Walton ranch," said the crotchety district attorney.

"I got as much right to the reward as the next one, I guess," flared the marshal. "If I wanna watch the ranch, I guess I got a right to do that too. You don't want to cherish any idea that you own the earth and me too, Artie Rale!"

"Well, you can ride along with us if you want to," condescended the district attorney.

"Thanks," said the marshal with sarcasm, "I kind of thought I would anyway."

Two hundred yards short of the bend in the draw that concealed the ranch-house from view the district attorney's horse, which was leading, snorted at something that lay across his path, and shied with great vigor, coming within a red hair of throwing the district attorney off on his ear.

The district attorney swore and jerked the animal back. Then he dismounted hurriedly and ran forward to view at close range the object that had startled the horse.

The three others pulled up and followed his example.

"My Gawd!" shrilled the district attorney. "It's Rafe Tuckleton!"

It was indeed Rafe Tuckleton. There he lay on his back, his legs and arms spread-eagled abroad, his body displaying the flattened appearance a corpse assumes for the first few hours after death. Rafe's throat had been slit from ear to ear. His head was cut open and lay in a pool of blood. His face was scored with scratches. There was blood on his coat and vest and shirt, they found on examination. The district attorney ripped open the shirt and found three distinct stab wounds in the region of Rafe's heart. From one of these wounds protruded the broken end of a broad-bladed knife.

"Pull it out," urged Sam Larder, with a slight shudder, his fat face so white that it showed green in the moonlight.

"I can't," said the district attorney. "Jammed in between his ribs, I guess. That's what busted her. See if you can find the handle, Red."

"There it is," pointed out the marshal. "Right by his elbow."

"Oh, yeah," said the district attorney, picking up the knife handle. From force of habit he fitted the broken part of the knife remaining attached to the handle to the part protruding from the wound. Of course they fitted perfectly.

The marshal ran his hand along Rafe's naked waist. Then he lifted one of Rafe's arms and let it go. The arm snapped stiffly back into position.

"Been dead about two hours," proffered the marshal.

"About that," agreed Felix. "What you lookin' at, Arthur?"

"This," replied the district attorney, holding up the handle of the butcher knife.

With his finger he traced two initials on the wood. The initials were T. W.

"You can't tell me," said the district attorney belligerently, "that this butcher knife didn't come from the Walton ranch."

Sam Larder stated his belief at once. "She couldn't have done it, Arthur. Why Rafe's carved up like an issue steer. She——"

"She's a woman," interrupted the district attorney. "And a woman will do anything when her dander is up. And we know what this particular woman will do when she's mad. Didn't she try to split open Nate Samson's head when he was hardly more than joking with her? Didn't she throw down on us with a rifle without any excuse a-tall. I tell you this Hazel Walton is a murderess and I'm going to see her hung."

BEHIND the corral of Guerilla Melody at the tip end of Golden Bar's Main Street a small spring bubbled to life amid rocks. It was the custom of Guerilla Melody to slip out to this spring for a long cool drink of fresh water each night before going to bed.

On the night of the first of April, Guerilla, having spent a short but profitable poker evening with several friends in a saloon, reached the spring at eleven o'clock.

"I thought you were never coming," announced a peevish voice from the black shadow of a large rock. "I've been waiting here since nine o'clock."

"You talk much louder, Bill," said Guerilla calmly, "and you'll wait here a while longer—say about twenty years longer or fifteen if the judge feels good-natured. Man alive, ain't you got *any* sense?"

"I was lonesome," Billy excused himself. "I've got to talk to somebody. And anyway a feller hardly ever gets more'n ten years for a holdup where nobody's killed."

"But where somebody *is* killed the penalty is worth considerin'," pointed out Guerilla Melody. "And Tip O'Gorman was found yesterday morning lying on the floor of his front room dead as Julius Cæsar, with your quirt beside him, and your snakeskin hatband inside the door."

"Tip killed! Tip!"

"Yes, Tip, and on account of the quirt and the hatband there's a warrant issued for you for the murder and two posses are out looking for you. And Tip ain't the only one cashed. Rafe Tuckelton passed out last night."

"How?"

"Throat cut, head cut, and three knife cuts through his heart. Hazel Walton is in jail charged with the job."

Billy Wingo stiffened where he sat. Hazel Walton in jail! For an instant he couldn't realize it.

"What evidence is there against Hazel?" Billy said sharply.

"In the first place there's the knife that killed Rafe," said Guerilla, seating himself beside his friend in the shadow of the rock. "Butcher knife with T. W. on the handle that Hazel admitted was hers when they showed it to her. But she said Dan Slike had taken the knife—stuck it in his boot when he left. Then there was Rafe's own gun which Hazel had lying on her kitchen table, showing he'd been there. She admitted that too, but said he'd attacked her and she'd managed to get hold of his gun after the clock fell on him, and drove him out."

"Rafe attacked her, huh? And she drove him out?" Billy leaned back against the rock in order to steady his shaking body. When he spoke, he found some difficulty in keeping his voice down. "*He attacked her and she drove him out!* Then what in hell is she arrested for—defending herself?"

"Now, listen, Bill, you know me. I believe anything that girl says, no matter what. But there are some other people harder to convince. The district attorney, and he's got a good many others stringing their chips with his, says how this story of Rafe's attacking her ain't true. When he and the other witnesses examined the Walton premises, they found plenty of evidence that there'd been a fight, and they found a lot of supplies gone, cartridges, grub and such, Hazel had bought in town the morning before. The district attorney says those supplies were bought for you and they were taken by you. Hazel's ridin' horse, the one used to be her uncle's, that's gone too—with you."

"If Rale thinks I was at Hazel's, it's reasonable to assume I might have had a hand in killin' Rafe my own self. That goes double for Dan Slike, seeing he had the knife last. But how did Slike get hold of the butcher-knife, that's what I want to know? He didn't have it on him when I arrested him last January."

"That's the damndest part of the whole deal, Bill. Hazel says Dan Slike came to her place before Rafe did, and it was him took the supplies and her horse and her hat and that very same butcher-knife which gave Rafe his come-uppance. Slike beat her almost senseless too, she said."

Billy Wingo looked up at the stars. His lips moved. But no sound issued. After a moment he said, in an oddly dead tone of voice: "How did Slike escape?"

"Far as anybody can tell he made him a key somehow and unlocked the jail door and walked out. Anyway, Riley Tyler found the door open yesterday afternoon and Dan's cell empty."

"Did Hazel say how long he stayed?"

"About an hour."

"I guess I'd better go see the district attorney."

Guerilla Melody chuckled as one does at a pleasantry.

"He may not have gone to sleep yet. I'll find out."

Before Billy could stay him, Guerilla was gone. Fifteen minutes later he returned.

"He's abed, snoring like a circular saw working on a knotty log," Guerilla informed him. "But there's a light in the kitchen."

"That means his housekeeper's up—probably settin' bread for to-morrow. Ain't she quite a friend of yours, Guerilla?"

The darkness veiled Guerilla's blush. "I see her now and then."

"Then go see her now," urged Billy. "It's kind of late for an evening call, but you can tell her some kind of a lie. If she likes you, she'll believe it. You go see her and keep her in the kitchen for the next thirty minutes. Then meet me here."

THE district attorney, lying on the broad of his back in bed, suddenly snored his way into a nightmare. He dreamt that he was in the woods, that he had lain down upon an inviting bank and that a ninety-foot pine had fallen upon his chest, to the prejudice of his breathing. He squirmed and wriggled, but the tree was immovable. It was slowly crushing the walls of his chest. The district attorney gasped—awoke, and discovered to his horror that his bad dream was partly true. There was something roosting on his chest. If not a tree, it was at least confoundedly heavy. Furthermore, adding as it were to the interest of the occasion, a something chilly and hard was rooting into the angle of his chin and neck.

The something on his chest spoke in a carefully restrained whisper. "Keep very quiet."

The district attorney would have shivered had he been able to move that much. He knew that voice. It belonged to Billy Wingo.

"You shouldn't have left your window open," pointed out Billy. "Your insane love for fresh air will be the death of you yet."

The district attorney did nothing but gasp faintly. "I—I—cuc—can't breathe!"

"Just a minute," said Billy, feeling beneath the pillows, but, finding no weapon, he slid from the district attorney's chest to the side of the bed. "You didn't expect to see me so soon, did you, Arthur?"

"No," was the truthful reply, "I didn't."

"I was counting on that. I hear you arrested Miss Walton."

"I—er—I had to," explained the district attorney, beginning to feel that, in the matter of Miss Walton, he had perhaps been a trifle hasty.

"Fool mistake. You didn't have any evidence against her a-tall."

"But—" began the district attorney.

Billy cut him short. "No evidence a-tall. Not a smidgin. No. You were too previous, Arthur, with your duty and your oath of office. Damn your duty, damn your oath of office. I've got a sneaking idea, old settler, that you are cluttering up the face of the earth. Be reasonable now, don't you think so yourself?"

BUT this was more than the district attorney was willing to admit. "I'll tell you what I think," he grunted. "I think if Hazel Walton didn't kill Rafe Tuckleton then you did."

"About *Miss* Walton there ain't any ifs, nary an if. She didn't do it. There is a reasonable doubt that I did it, several reasonable doubts in fact. Anyway, Arthur, try keeping your suspicions to yourself to oblige me, will you? Lord knows one murder and a stage holdup are enough crimes to be charged with at one time."

The district attorney could hear the murmur of his housekeeper's voice in the kitchen. Some man, then, was in the kitchen with her. Lord! if he dared yell for help!

As though sensing what was passing in the mind of the district attorney, Billy jabbed the gunsight up under the man's chin. "Don't gamble with me, Arthur. Think how your friends would miss you."

But Arthur had already decided against doing any gambling. "What do you want?" he whispered.

"I've been hoping you'd ask me that. It gives me an opening and shows you're willing to be reasonable. Yeah. Arthur, I want you to set Miss Walton free."

"You go to hell," was the sharp return.

"You don't understand," said Billy in his lightsome whisper. "You're thinking because I'm talking to you so bright and merry that I don't mean what I say. Listen—" the whisper lost its airiness and became a ruthless snarling growl—"listen to me. Because of what you've done to her it's all I can do to keep from strangling the breath out of you here and now. If I talked to you the way I feel like talking to you, I'd lose my temper and you'd lose your life. I'm trying to hang on to both—for now. Don't make it any harder for me than you have to." He paused. "About Miss Walton," he continued in his former tone. "I'll give you your choice. Let her go, and I won't down you by Sunday night."

"Huh?"

"Sunday night. If she isn't out of jail and the warrant against her withdrawn by noon to-morrow, I give you my word that I'll down you on or before midnight Sunday. And I have a habit of keeping my promises."

The district attorney knew this to be true. But he was a wriggler by nature. "I—" he began.

"You can do it," interrupted Billy. "You have the power."

"Well," bumbled the district attorney, "maybe I *could* manage it. But look here, what's the use of me letting her go? You couldn't run away with her. *You'd* be caught sure as fate, and then where would you be?"

"I don't intend to run away with her or without her. Only a fool runs away. A man of sense stays comfortably in the background waiting for the cat to jump."

"But—" The district attorney stopped abruptly at the word.

"And you'll free the girl to-night?"

"To-night? Why not to-morrow?"

"To-night. I don't like her having to sleep in that calaboose. You let her out and tell Shotgun Shillman to take her to Sam Prescott's right away—right away to-night, y'understand?"

"All right," capitulated the district attorney. "I'll do it if I lose my job. But you needn't go swarmin' off with any idea that you'll cheat the gallows. You'll swing, my bold boy, for that O'Gorman murder. There's nothing you can do to me that will fix up that business for you—not if you were to kill me here and now. Judge Donelson wouldn't allow me to withdraw that warrant even if I wanted to. The evidence is too strong."

"So you really think I downed Tip?" Billy asked curiously.

"I know it."

"And held up the stage? Unofficially, Arthur, are you holding that against me, too?"

"You held up the stage. Jerry Fern saw your horse. So did all the passengers. Your clothes were identified, too. Jerry told the passengers to pay particular attention to your clothes and the brass guard on your gun and be able to describe 'em later. They did and everybody in town recognized 'em. Oh, we've got you."

"So clever of you—and cleverer of Jerry Fern. He told the passengers to remember what I wore, did he?"

"Naturally," said the district attorney hastily. "It was the obvious thing to do."

Billy nodded. "Of course it was. Bright man, Jerry. Tell you, Arthur, suppose I bring back Dan Slike, would that help me in—my trouble?"

"How do you mean?"

"You want Dan Slike caught, don't you?"

"Of course I do."

"Liar," Billy said to himself. Aloud he remarked. "You've come around, I see. You really believe now that Dan Slike killed Tom Walton and Judge Driver?"

"Certainly, he killed them," avowed the district attorney. "And when he's caught we'll hang him."

"That's the proper spirit, Arthur. I have a theory that, since it seems certain that Dan Slike didn't go to Walton's after he escaped, he went north to the Medicine Mountains."

"Why?"

"You followed his trail north to where the West Fork swings due west and there you lost it, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, it's certain Slike didn't follow the Fork down. That would bring him to the country east of here, and Tom Read County is no place for a murderer. Now, what he did was ride the rocky ground along the Fork till it swung north again, when he'd either swing north with it straight for the Medicine Mountains or else ride a li'l west of north and hit the Medicines away to the westward of Jacksboro. And in the Medicines you might as well look for a needle in a bale of hay. He'll lie low there for a spell, probably during spring and summer. You may depend on it, that's what he's done."

"I don't see what you're driving at."

"I mean I'll make a bargain with you, Rale. I'll trade you Slike for myself. You will prosecute these cases against me, if I'm caught. It lies with you whether I get a chance for my alley or not."

"How?"

"You could fail to take advantage of points as they come up. You could. You're clever enough, Gawd knows. Now, in the O'Gorman deal I'd plead not guilty. I killed Tip in self-defense, see? Well, you could let me prove I did mighty easy. Same with the hold-up. I'll get me a clever lawyer who'd take advantage of some flaw in the indictment. You would draw up that indictment. I don't believe we could risk flaws in both indictments, could we?"

THE district attorney could hardly believe his wicked ears. It simply was not possible that Bill Wingo could be such a simpleton as to believe that. "Flaws in both indictments would be a li'l too raw," said the district attorney, almost suffocating in the effort to dissemble his glee.

"Yes, well, all right. In the O'Gorman murder trial you'll let me prove my case and in the other you'll stick in a flaw. The Tuckleton case you can't do a thing with. There's not enough evidence, so you'll have to let it drop. What do you think of the proposition, Dan Slike for Bill Wingo? You can make a record with Dan Slike too. He hasn't a friend in the county. Another thing. That last bribe of yours I mentioned a while ago. I'll throw in what I know about that for good measure with Slike."

"But why stand your trial at all?" fenced the district attorney. "Why not try to escape?"

"You forget that not ten minutes ago you told me I couldn't possibly escape. You were wrong, naturally. But I don't want to escape. If I did, I'd have these things hanging over me the rest of my life. No matter where I went I'd always be looking for a warrant waiting for me at every bend in the trail. No, the only sensible way out is to get this thing over with and settled as soon as possible. I don't want to leave Crocker County. I like it here."

"Oh," murmured the district attorney, believing that he knew the reason why Billy Wingo did not care to leave the county. It was a good and sufficient reason and he expected to release it from jail that very night.

"But you'd have to get supplies from time to time," he said leadingly. "Your description is in every town by now."

"I'll only go to Jacksboro when I have to buy anything," explained Billy, "and as it happens I never was there but once and that was five years ago. If I let my beard and hair grow, who'd know me? It would take somebody from Golden Bar to recognize my voice, and I'll take care to keep out of the way of anybody from Golden Bar. Oh, it'll be safe enough. I'll make my camp somewhere on Coldstream Creek and work all through the Medicines from there. I'll get Dan and bring him back. How about it now—willing to make it easy for me at the trial?"

The district attorney could hardly control his voice. At last the devil had delivered his enemy into his hands. Now he could pay him back for kicking him out into the snow. You bet he could. "I'll do as you suggest," he said, "and drop the Tuckleton case in so far as you and Miss Walton are concerned, and I'll let you win on the other two counts—provided you bring back Dan Slike."

"Fair enough. In the meantime I want a free hand. You'll have to call off the posses that are out after me. You can do that without exciting suspicion. Look how long they've been out."

"I'll manage it," declared the district attorney. "You think the Coldstream is a good place to camp?"

"Sure it is. I've been there before."

"Don't risk going to any other town than Jacksboro."

"I won't," said Billy. "Be sure of that. Well, I guess I'd better be draggin' it. You'll be wanting to let Miss Walton out. By the way, don't forget that I'm not leaving the neighborhood till I hear that Miss Walton is safe at Prescott's and the warrant against her withdrawn. Just bear that in mind, Arthur."

"I will," Arthur said warmly. "Shall I suggest to Miss Walton that a letter would be sure to reach you at Jacksboro—under an assumed name, of course?"

"It would be hardly worth while," replied Billy. "Unless I catch Dan Slike sooner, I don't expect to be in Jacksboro under a month. Yeah, a month anyway."

"A month, huh? Here's wishing you luck."

Billy failed to observe the brazenly outstretched hand. "Thanks," he drawled. "So long."

BUT in spite of the agreement it was noticeable that he kept the district attorney covered till his boot-soles touched the ground beneath the window.

"Are you crazy?" demanded Guerilla Melody when he had heard all, or thought he had, rather. "You don't actually sure-enough trust him, do you?"

"Certainly not," Billy replied calmly, flicking the ash from his cigaret. "Certainly I don't trust him. That's why I told him what I did."

Guerilla Melody screwed a forefinger into the side of his head. "Wheels, wheels, wheels, hear 'em buzz."

"You don't understand, Guerilla. You're all right lots of ways, and I'm your friend, and don't let anybody tell you different, but you haven't any brains, not a brain."

"Now, look here," began the indignant Guerilla, "if you——"

"Shut up and listen," Billy cut him short. "I ain't going to the Medicine Mountains a-tall."

"Where *are* you going?"

"South—after Dan Slike. Don't you see, this fool district attorney won't think of skirmishing after me *south* of Golden Bar. But I'll bet he'll have posses combin' the Medicines within seven days. And if I haven't read him wrong, he'll have a warrant for the Tuckleton murder issued for me, too."

Guerilla nodded a grave head. "With Miss Walton out of it he'll have to cinch it on to somebody else. But I don't see yet how finding Dan Slike, always supposin' you do find him, is going to help you any.

You'll still have to stand your own trial. And you ain't thinkin' that Arthur Rale——"

"Oh, angels ever bright and fair! The man doesn't see it yet! I intend to bring in the murderer of Tip O'Gorman and the man who held up the stage, too, while I'm at it. In words of one syllable *that* is my plan."

The expression on the face of Guerilla Melody was one of awe diluted with doubt. "All by your lonesome?"

"Why not?"

"Maybe I'd better go with you?" offered Guerilla.

"No," said Bill decidedly, "I'd rather you were here in Golden Bar. Then you can tell me the news now and then. Outside of you and Shotgun and Riley there ain't a soul in town I can trust, and for official reasons I can't go near the deputies. So I guess you're elected, Guerilla."

"Aw right," said his friend. "You're the doctor. Have another drink?"

"Not to-night. Look at the time. Here we've been gassin' a solid hour. I didn't have any business coming into your house anyway. Never can tell who might walk in on us."

"You better wait till I find out from Riley if Rale kept his word about Hazel Walton."

"I won't have to wait here for that. When you come back from talking to Riley, if everything is O. K. and Hazel has started with Shotgun for Prescott's, you set a lamp on your kitchen table and open and close your kitchen door four times. If Rale hasn't moved, open your kitchen door and stand in the doorway for half a minute. I'll be watchin' from the ridge— Huh? Sure, I've got field-glasses. Borrowed a pair from Sam Prescott same time I borrowed a horse. So long, Guerilla!"

Guerilla Melody blocked off the light of the lamp with his hat while Billy opened the door and vanished into outer darkness.

THE time was an evening in the first week in May; the place was the Arkansas Saloon in Willow Bend, Redstone County; the man was Billy Wingo. He was draped against the bar, making rings on the bar top with the wet bottom of his whisky glass.

The weather was unseasonably warm, and the big double-burner reflector lamps in the saloon raised the barroom temperature at least fifteen degrees. Billy felt the salty moisture running down into his eyes. He pushed back his hat and with a fillip of his fingers slatted off the perspiration.

He did not see a man at the other end of the bar look up at his sudden movement. Nor, when he departed after his second glass, did he know that the other man was following until he had passed out into the street. Then, with that sixth sense men who carry their lives in their holsters so frequently develop, he knew it. Hence, quite naturally, instead of going directly to the hotel hitching-rail where his horse was tied, he sauntered with apparent aimlessness round the corner of the saloon, along the blank side wall and round the next corner.

In the darkness behind this corner, gun in hand, he waited. The other man slid round the corner in his wake and ran plump into the muzzle of the Wingo six-shooter.

"Were you looking for me?" Bill asked in a low tone.

The man, having shown that he was no shorthorn by promptly throwing up his hands, laughed lowly: "I was looking for you," he said, still chuckling, "but not the way you mean."

"Your voice sounds familiar," said the sceptical Billy. "Suppose you step over here into the light from this window. Keep your hands up."

"Glad to—both ways," agreed the man, obeying instantly. "Satisfied now?"

"You can put 'em down," said Billy sliding his gun back into the holster as soon as the light fell on the man's face. "I thought you went up to Jacksboro to visit your uncle."

"I did," said John Dawson. "But I thought I'd drift back for the Cross T roundup. On my way south I stopped at Golden Bar."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. I was looking for a gent name of Tuckleton. I saw where he was buried."

"I guess you heard something while you were there, huh?"

"I heard something in Jacksboro, too. That's why I followed you. Le's go where we can talk private."

On a log, in the darkness, behind the dance-hall, they sat down to talk "private."

"What did you hear in Jacksboro?" Billy asked.

"I heard a posse talk—six men. I met

'em over on Coldstream Creek three-four times."

Billy uttered a light laugh. "I figured it would be that way."

"They seemed to think you'd oughta been camping on Coldstream."

"What kind of a warrant did they have?"

"All kinds. Two murders and a stage holdup."

"Was one of 'em on account of Tuckleton?"

"Yep. I didn't know whether to hold it against you or not."

"You needn't. It wasn't me."

DAWSON grinned his appreciation. "I'm glad. If you had it would have always been between us. I had figured on playing even-Steven with Tuckleton myself."

"I'm looking for the man who killed him. If I don't find him, I needn't go back to Golden Bar."

"I heard you'd been suspended from office," said Dawson bluntly.

"I hadn't heard it yet, but I expected it. Anybody else appointed?"

"Shotgun Shillman, *pro tem.*"

"I almost wish it was somebody else," he said whimsically. "Shotgun is a friend of mine, and energetic as a bear with a bee tree. He'll maybe dump me before I do what I want."

"If he's a friend of yours—" hinted Dawson.

"He'd arrest his own brother if there was a warrant issued against him. He's that kind."

"A conscience is a heavy load to pack," said the cynical Dawson. "Me, I believe the end justifies the means. It don't matter much what trail you follow so you get there. Can I help you any?"

"How?"

"I dunno—any old way. You did me one good turn and I'm not forgetting it. Anything I got you can have any time anywhere."

"Now, that's right clever of you," said Billy, somewhat embarrassed at the other's gratitude. "But I don't guess you can help me any."

"Try me," urged Dawson.

"The man who killed Tuckleton is a man named Dan Slike, who broke out of jail just before he was going to be tried for another murder. The only way you can help me is by telling me where he is, and I expect you can't do that."

"Not right off the reel," admitted Dawson. "Ain't you picked up any trail of this sport?"

"I've cut his trail five different places, Bow Bells, Gunsight, Dragoon, Shadyside, and the Rafter L. I figured he'd come here after leavin' the Rafter L—it's only thirty miles. But I guess he didn't. Leastwise nobody seems to have noticed anybody of his description."

"You haven't described him to me yet," pointed out Dawson.

Billy began. ". . . and maybe a black beard by now," he concluded.

"Bow Bells, Gunsight, Dragoon, Shadyside and the Rafter L," repeated Dawson, rasping a hand across his stubbly chin.

"South, y'understand, till he reached Shadyside, and then he headed northeast to the Rafter L. What I'd like to know is what made him change direction thataway?"

"He ain't in any hurry to leave the territory, that's a cinch."

"Not after he left Shadyside anyway."

"Something happened there to head him."

"Sure. But whatever it was it wasn't visible to the naked eye. Rafter L, the same way. He stopped there for dinner and rode away without spending the night."

"He may have gone to Marquis."

Billy nodded. "He may. But Marquis is more north than east. That's why I came here first. Anyway, to-morrow morning I'm riding to Marquis, and if he ain't there I'll sift through the country between Marquis and Dorothy. There are several ranches in between those two towns."

"I'll go with you," announced Dawson.

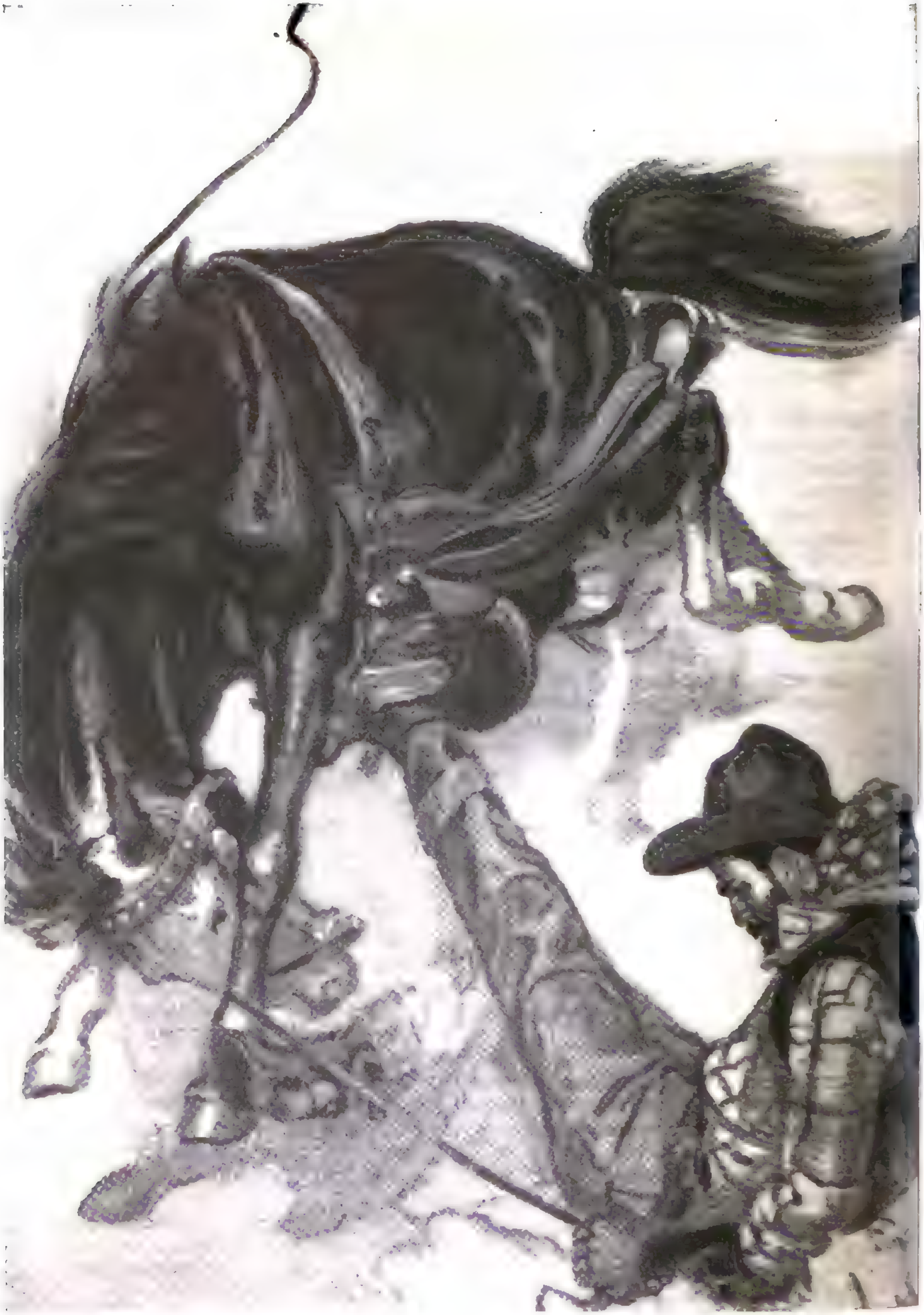
Billy surveyed his neighbor in surprise. "You. What for?"

"For fun—exercise—any old thing you like, that is, if it ain't a private party."

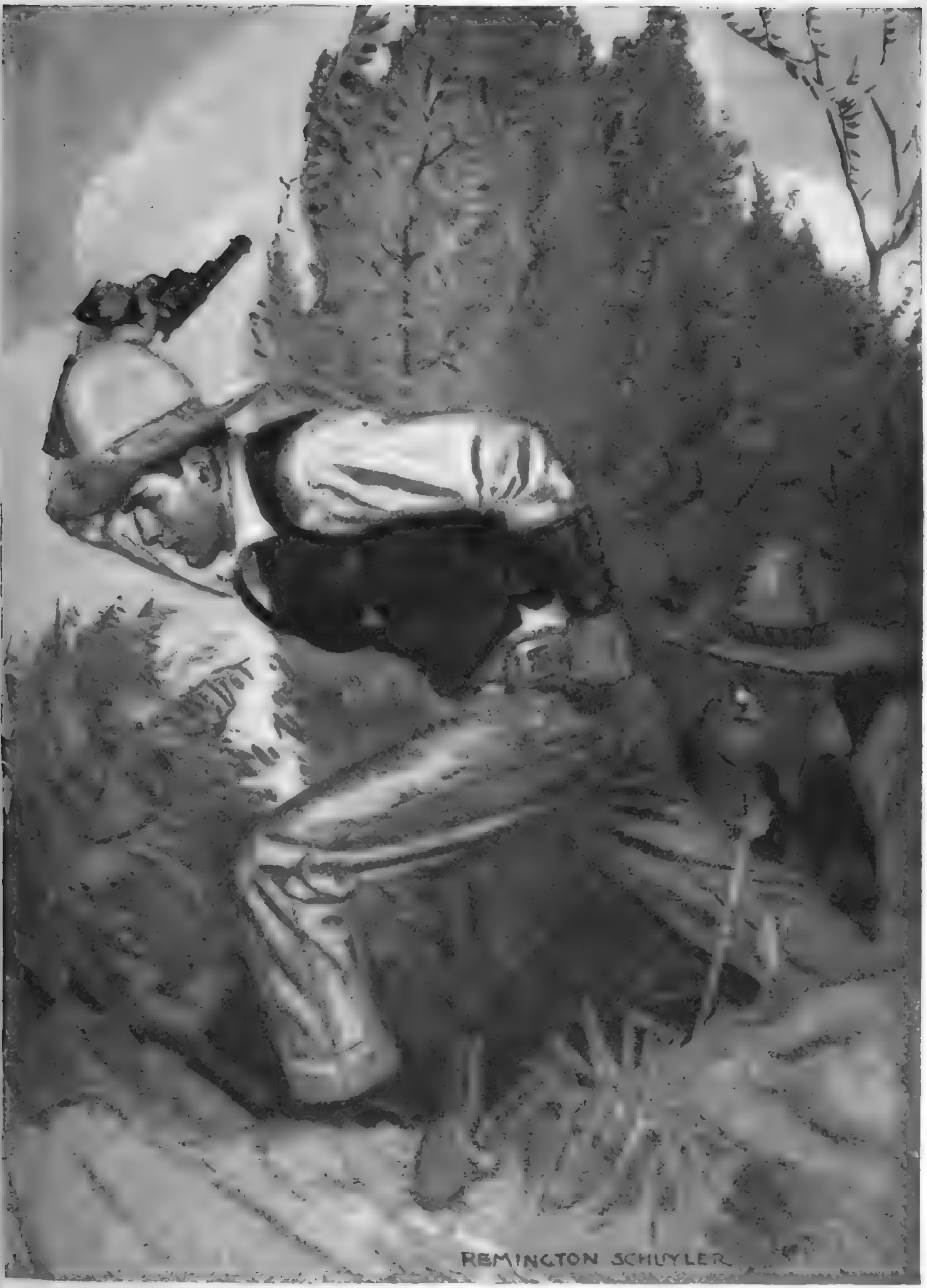
"You can sit in if you want to," said Billy slowly, more glad to accept an ally than he cared to admit. "But you've got a job."

"The job can wait. Roundup's over, so it won't hurt the ranch to lose my valuable services for a spell. To-morrow we go to Dorothy, huh?"

The following day Billy journeyed by the direct trail to Dorothy, while Dawson traveled by a more circuitous route that would



Holding the reins in one hand, Slike gripped a saddle-horn and simultaneously stuck toe in stirrup. Ensued one foot higher than his head. A gun barrel appeared from



a mighty creak of saddle leather, a snort, a plunge, and Slike found himself on his back on the ground with nowhere and smote him smartly over the ear. Total darkness.

take him past two ranch-houses where there might be information to be picked up. Billy Wingo, without pushing his horse, reached Dorothy too late for the regular dinner at the hotel. Adjoining the Carnation Saloon was a two-by-four restaurant. He entered the place, sat down at the oilcloth-covered table and gave his order to the good-looking young woman who was evidently cook, hasher and washer combined.

In one corner of the restaurant an eight-year-old girl was squatting on the floor and bathing two wooden dollies in a tin wash-basin.

"I'll finish giving you your bath, Sally Jane, soon as I get fresh water. Emmaline is nice and clean, but you're a dirty, dirty girl, Sally Jane."

Sally Jane! There it was again. Merely a coincidence, of course, but it was odd to run across this combination of proper names. Billy began to take more than a passing interest in the eight-year-old.

The little girl resumed her animated monolog. "I tell you what, Sally Jane, if you don't keep yourself cleaner I'm gonna go back to calling you Maria again."

Then it was that the hunch came to Billy Wingo.

"Winnie," he said, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees and wearing his most engaging smile, "Winnie, that Sally Jane dolly is sure one fine-lookin' lady."

Winnie regarded him with an indulgent eye. "She's my favorite, Sally Jane is."

"Sally Jane is a pretty name too."

"I like it."

"You haven't always called her Sally Jane, have you?"

"Not always. I used to call her Mariar. My auntie says Mariar sounds like a cat talking, but I liked it till I heard Sally Jane, then I liked Sally Jane best."

"And when did you hear the name Sally Jane?"

"Long, long ago."

"Oh." Disappointment on the part of Billy Wingo. Farewell, hunch. Nevertheless he essayed a forlorn hope. "How long?"

"Most a week."

Most a week! Billy had forgotten that child-time runs faster than grown-up time. The hunch pricked up its little ears and began to return. "Where did you hear that name?"

"Man in the Carnation. He was drunk, and he went round talking to God in the saloon. I heard him through the window. Lots of men do that. My Auntie says they'll frizzle when they die."

"They ought to," pronounced the righteously indignant Bill. "Did this man say anything about Sally Jane?"

"Lots."

"In the saloon?"

"At the woodpile out back. I was making a li'l dollhouse behind it, and he came and lay down beside the woodpile to sleep it off."

Oh, the wisdom of the frontier child!

"Weren't you afraid?" probed Billy.

"Nah. Why, you needn't ever be afraid of a drunk man. They can't hurt you if you keep out of their way. I've seen lots of drunk men, I have, in my time."

BILLY was somewhat overwhelmed. "That's fine," he said lamely. "Did you run away when the drunk man came out to the woodpile to sleep it off?"

"Nah. Ain't I said I ain't scared of drunks? I didn't run away. I stayed right there on the other side of the woodpile listening to the drunk man."

"I thought you said he went to sleep."

"He talked in his sleep," patiently explained the amazing Winnie.

"What did he say?"

"Lots."

"Did he say anything about Sally Jane?"

"He said he loved her."

"Anything else?"

"He said he was gonna marry Sally Jane by Gawd and nobody else was gonna do it but him."

"Did he talk about any men?"

"He talked about Bill."

"Bill who?"

"Bill Wingo."

"Now, we're gettin' there. Did he say anything particular about Bill Wingo?"

"He said he was gonna shoot him."

"What for?"

"For being sheriff, or something. I don't remember that exactly."

"You've remembered enough. What kind of a looking man was this drunk?"

"Oh, he was an old, old man."

"Old, huh? How old?"

"Oh, about your age."

Billy began to feel like Methuselah. "What did he look like in the face?"

The winsome Winnie looked at him critically. "Something like you in the face. Sort of scrubby-looking and dirty."

"What color were the whiskers?"

"Oh, black."

"Was his hair black?"

"Yop, his hair was black."

"Was he a li'l, short, runty feller?"

"Nope, he was a big, tall feller, skinny sort of."

"Did you hear his name?"

"His friend called him Damn-your-soul sometimes and Jack sometimes."

So Jack Murray had gathered unto himself a friend. This was interesting, especially as Jack was apparently still cherishing plans for revenge. If Jack and the anonymous friend were in the vicinity of Dorothy it behooved a man in Billy's position to look to himself.

Billy had no illusions about Jack Murray. The man was perfectly capable of making another try at him from ambush. He did not believe that Jack would "snitch." Such procedure would indubitably attract too much public attention to Jack. He couldn't afford that. Not with three thousand dollars on his head.

"Is the drunk with the black hair and whiskers around town?" he asked.

"They ate dinner here yesterday."

"They—oh, he and his friend?"

"Yop, him and his friend."

Billy got up and went to the door of the kitchen. "Excuse me, ma'am, do you remember a tall, black-haired feller and a friend with him who ate in here yesterday noon?"

Oh, yes, the good-looking girl rememberered perfectly both men. Billy thought that it would be as well to have a description of the friend. Would she describe him. She would and did. The description was that of Slike, Slike with a short beard. The man's eyes, she said, seemed to bore right through her. They gave her the creeps.

Billy believed he had heard enough for the time being.

After dinner Billy went up and down Main Street scraping acquaintance with storekeepers, saloonkeepers, the hotel proprietor and the town marshal. By five o'clock he had established the fact that two ranches of the neighborhood, the T U and the Horseshoe, were at loggerheads, and that the Horseshoe was hiring gunfighters; that the black-haired man called Jack and his friend, whose name no one knew, had been engaged in conversation with the Horseshoe foreman; that the following day they had told a bartender that they had offers of good jobs at one hundred a month apiece; and that finally, a wolfer had met them on the range riding in the direction of the Horseshoe ranch.

That night Billy and Dawson disappeared from Dorothy.

CRACK! Crack! Crack! the voices of the Winchesters drifted faintly down wind to the ears of Billy and Dawson. Billy, fearful that some one else had seen their quarry first, swore frankly.

"Cheer up," said Dawson. "It may be just the chance we're lookin' for. They've stopped shootin'."

Billy remained pessimistic. He had been disappointed so often. But it was the chance they were looking for, after all.

Five minutes later from the edge of a flat-topped hill they were looking down upon a scene that has had many counterparts in the history of the West.

Below the flat-topped hill a wide stretch of rolling ground reached away to a semicircle of low hills. A quarter-mile out from the base of the hills a tiny fire smoked fitfully. Beyond the fire lay a hog-tied calf. Beyond the calf a man sprawled behind the body of a pony. He was aiming a rifle at another man ensconced below a cutbank bordering a small creek that meandered with many windings across the rolling country. This second man was not blatantly visible. Even with the glasses it was difficult to make him out. For cottonwoods grew above the cutbank and the man lay in deep shadow.

Between this man and the man behind the pony were three hundred yards of ground as flat as a floor. Billy swept the background of the cutbank man with his glasses. "There are two horses tied behind a windfall alongside those rocks. Where's the other man?"

"There's the other man," said Dawson, pointing toward a gap in the cottonwoods alongside the creek fifty yards down stream from the cutbank. "What's he doing—drinking?"

Billy turned his glasses on the spot

indicated. "He ain't drinking," he said soberly. "His head's under water."

"I'm sure hoping he ain't Dan Slike," Dawson said matter-of-factly.

"Me too. What——"

For the man behind the cutbank was climbing up among the cottonwoods—climbing up and walking out into plain sight of the man behind the pony. Not only that, but, rifle across the crook of his elbow, nursing the butt with his right hand, he began to walk directly toward him. Still the man behind the pony did not fire.

"He's cashed all right," Billy remarked suddenly. "He looked so natural he fooled me for a minute. Let's go down across the creek. We're in luck to-day."

They ran down the reverse slope of the flat-topped hill, cut across the creek and approached the horses tied behind the windfall.

"I'm afraid we'll just naturally have to kill Dan after all," grieved Billy. "He won't ever surrender. I——"

"Tell you," said Dawson, "loosen the cinches, then no matter which horse he tops he'll jerk himself down. Then maybe while he's all tangled up with himself and the saddle——"

"Catchem-alivoes ourselves," said Billy, with a hard grin, and tossed up the near fender of one of the saddles.

When both saddles had been carefully doctored, Billy and his friend retired modestly behind some red willows.

Soon they heard a scramble and a splash in the creek. Dan Slike was coming back. Through the screen of leaves they watched him coming toward them. They heard his voice. He was swearing a great string of oaths. Billy crouched a trifle lower. His six-shooter was out, but not cocked. Dawson had followed his example.

Slike jammed his Winchester into one of the empty scabbards and untied the bridle reins of the horses. Holding the reins in one hand, he gripped a saddle-horn and simultaneously stuck toe in stirrup. Ensued then a mighty creak of saddle leather, a snort, a plunge, and Slike found himself on his back on the ground with one foot higher than his head. A gun barrel appeared from nowhere and smote him smartly over the ear. Oh, ye sun, moon and stars! Total darkness.

Billy sprang to the heads of the capering horses. "Take his hat off, Johnny!" he cried. "See what you find under the sweatband!"

When Slike emerged into the full possession of his senses, he was the most disgusted man in the territory.

"You gave us quite a run," Billy observed smilelessly.

Slike damned everybody. "You needn't have tied my hands, too," he added.

"We can't afford to take chances. Do you feel like admitting that the district attorney helped you break jail?"

Slike glared defiantly. "Nothin' to say," declared Dan Slike, the unrepentant.

"That's your privilege. Suppose now we heave him up on his horse and go see what happened."

THEY freed his feet, mounted him on the horse that was not packing the rifle and proceeded. Behind the gap in the cottonwoods, fifty yards below the spot under the cutbank where Slike had lain, they found the body of the man with his face in the water. Billy dragged out the body and turned it on its back.

"What you cussin' for?" inquired Dawson.

"This feller ain't Jack Murray," cried the perplexed Mr. Wingo. "It's Skinny Shindle."

"Looks like we must have missed a bet somewhere," said Dawson. "Plugged him plumb center, didn't he?" he added, alluding to the red-and-blue bullet-hole squarely between the staring eyes.

"I got the other sport," snarled Slike.

"Where's Jack Murray?" demanded Billy.

"What difference does that make?" flung back Dan Slike.

It was evident that Slike was not in a confiding mood.

After all, decided Billy, Jack Murray did not matter, and promptly forgot him. Had he known how important a place the slippery Mr. Murray actually held in the scheme of things, he, Billy Wingo, would not have been so casual.

Nobody said anything further. They left Skinny Shindle lying beside the little creek and went on to where the other dead man lay beside the embers of the branding-fire.

"That's a T U horse," said Dawson, glancing at the brand on the pony's hip.

Billy turned the dead man face upward. He whistled. "Here's an odd number, Johnny. This feller is Simon Reelfoot's foreman. You've heard me speak of that low-lived persimmon, Simon Reelfoot. This boy is named Conley. Been with Reelfoot for years. I'd sure like to know why he was riding for the T U."

TOWARD dawn next day the horses showed signs of tiring. "Mine won't last another five miles," said Johnny Dawson.

"This is as good a place as any," said Billy briefly. "We'll stop here."

They dismounted Slike and stripped and hobbled the horses. Slike had not enjoyed the long night ride. He was disposed to be peevish. "I want a smoke," he demanded.

Billy ceased pounding coffee and fixed him with a hard eye. "You won't get it," he said shortly.

"Helluva way to treat a prisoner," snarled Slike. "You done better by me when I was in jail."

"Lots of things have happened since. But don't you fret. I'll give you what you deserve in about five minutes. I missed out on it yesterday, but I'll try to see you don't lose anything by the delay."

"Huh?" puzzled Slike.

"You remember going to Miss Walton's ranch," elaborated Billy in a cold, monotonous tone. "You beat her."

"Hell, nothin' to that. I only pulled her hair a few times and slammed her once or twice."

"You kicked her, too."

"Not hard, though. Besides I had to. She was stubborn. My Gawd, you wouldn't begin to believe how stubborn that girl was!"

Billy laid aside the rock with which he had been pounding coffee. "I guess the coffee can wait better than I can."

He stood up limberly and unbuckled his cartridge belt and dropped it beside Johnny Dawson, who was slicing bacon. Then he crossed to Slike and untied the knots of the rope that bound him. Slike stretched his arms and legs but made no offer to rise. Billy nudged him in the ribs with the toe of his boot.

"What's that for?" roared Slike, scrambling to his feet.

"I'm going to give you the best licking you ever got. You've had it coming a long time, and now you're going to get it."

"Is that so?" sneered Slike. "Is that so? You expecting to do all this without help?"

Fists doubled, Billy started for Slike. The latter sidestepped and feinted Billy into a position between himself and Dawson. Slike crouched. His right hand flashed downward. The fingers fumbled at his bootleg. Billy ran in, expecting to beat Slike flat.

"Look out!" cried Dawson, as Slike's hand shot up and out accompanied by the vicious twinkle of steel.

But Billy, coming in with the speed of a springing wildcat, slipped a bootsole on a rock and fell. Slike's thrust sped past his head so close that Slike's knuckles brushed his ear.

Billy got one foot under himself and threw up an arm in time to catch on the turn the wrist of Slike's knife hand. Slike promptly changed hands. But Billy caught the other wrist, not, however, before the knife had narrowly missed slicing the flesh on his floating ribs. Slike's head dipped forward and he sank his teeth in Billy's shoulder. Billy drove a knee into Slike's stomach and Slike unclamped his teeth with a gasp. Over he went. Billy stayed with him.

Dawson, who had dropped bacon and frying-pan at the first blow, saw his opportunity and lunged down to wrench away Slike's knife. Which was not at all to Billy's mind.

"Let it alone!" gasped the warrior. "He ain't giving me a bit of trouble."

The reluctant Dawson obeyed.

Slike, his body writhing like that of a scotched snake, could not budge his pinned-down knife hand. Inch by inch Billy dragged his own body forward and upward until he was resting on his knees with Slike between his legs.

"Leggo that knife!" he directed.

Slike's reaction was humanly natural. At least there were no hobbles on his tongue.

"Well, all right, if you say so," Billy told him, and rejoiced to perceive the top of a small rock not six inches from Slike's knife hand.

He forced the knife hand inward toward the rock. Then he proceeded, with all his might, to batter the back of Slike's hand against the pointed top of the rock. Slike's face changed at the first blow; at the second he involuntarily groaned; at the third his fingers unclosed. The knife tinkled on the rock.

Billy pounced on the knife, threw it yards away and scrambled to his feet. "Get up, Slike! Stand on your feet! Come and get it!"

Whatever other thing Slike was he was certainly no coward. Instead he was a glutton for punishment. He jerked himself to his feet and ran headlong into a straight-arm blow that made his nose bleed and his neck ache. As has been said, Slike had no science. Neither had Billy. In which respect the fight was equal. But Slike was only fighting for himself. Billy was fighting not only for himself but to revenge Slike's treatment of the girl he loved.

When he flattened Slike's nose, pleasure ensued—for Billy. It was joy to his heart when the next blow landed on Slike's right eye and laid him all along the grass. Three times Billy knocked Slike down and three times the killer hopped to his feet and came back for more. But after the third knock-down it was noticeable that Slike was appreciably slower and considerably more cautious. His face was a sight. One eye was completely closed. His nose was broken, his lips cut and two teeth were missing.

Slike came to a halt in front of Billy, blew a bubble of blood from his lips and wiped his good eye with the back of his hand. He swayed on his legs. But this display of weakness was more apparent than genuine. Billy, watching Slike's one good eye, was not misled thereby. There was no hint of weakness in Slike's eye. Indeed there was strength and hatred a-plenty.

Accordingly when Slike suddenly lowered his head and dodged in under Billy's guard with the evident intention of starting another "snatch and wrastle," Billy was ready, very ready. His uplifted knee met Slike full in the face. Slike straightened instantly, and Billy hooked his right to the point of the chin. Slike didn't need that last blow. The knee blow had already given him a clean knockout.

He took the ground limply and lay motionless. Billy stood and looked at him and blew upon his skinned knuckles and suddenly realized that it was a good old world after all. There might be some mean citizens scattered here and there. But they always got their come-uppances in the end.

Dawson joined him. "Sure looked like a mule had kicked in his dashboard. I dunno when I ever saw a more complete job. That face don't look genuine a-tall."

"I'm sure ashamed of myself," muttered Billy.

"Whyfor? You did just right. I'd have done the same in your place. You got no call to be ashamed."

"Not for licking him. That was all right. But I searched him and let him hide out a butcher-knife on me in his bootleg—*in his bootleg*."

"That handle was down inside the leather. You couldn't see it. I didn't."

"I should have found it alla same," fretted Billy. "There's no excuse for such carelessness—none."

He went across to where he had thrown the knife and picked it up. He caught his breath. On the handle of the butcher-knife the letters T W were cut deep into the wood.

WHEN, for the second time that day, Slike recovered consciousness, Billy showed him the butcher-knife.

"How many butcher-knives did you take from Walton's?" he demanded.

"One," replied Slike.

"And is this the one?"

"Sure it is. Why not?"

"Why, hell's bells!" exclaimed Billy, "then you didn't kill Rafe Tuckleton."

"First I knew he was dead," Slike said thoughtfully. "As a rule, I don't kill my customers," he added with a grin rendered more horrible by his battered and bloody features. "I can't afford to. Maybe you killed him yourself. How about it? Aw right! Go to hell then! And I want to say right here you tied my arms and legs too tight! There ain't no feelin' in any of 'em!"

Billy paid Slike no further attention. His brain seemed to find it difficult to function. "She said he only took one knife," he told himself stupidly and sat down to think it over.

He had caught Slike. But he was no nearer the solution of the Tuckleton murder than he was in the beginning. His theory that Slike had killed Tuckleton was smashed to smithereens by the discovery of the Walton butcher-knife in Slike's bootleg. Unless Slike had taken two knives. But Slike had not taken two knives. According to Hazel's testimony he had taken only one.

It was then that Billy suddenly realized that he should have known better in the first place than to connect Slike with the murder of Tuckleton. Dan Slike was too experienced a longhorn to leave incriminating evidence behind him if he could help it. And if he had killed Tuckleton he would at least have taken away the handle of the knife. But the handle had been left beside the body for any one to pick up. Manifestly, then, it had been left there with the design to throw suspicion upon a person other than the murderer—for instance, a person intimately connected with the Walton ranch.

Mechanically he began to play mumbletypeg with the butcher-knife—palm of hand, back of hand, right fist, left fist, and had progressed as far as his left pinky in the movement known as off fingers of each hand when he sat back and stared at the knife quivering in the turf. He thought he saw a gleam of light. The very fact of the two knives, each a match of the other, was as obvious a contrariety as any that ever delighted the soul of Mr. William Noy. Attaching to the demise of Rafe Tuckleton was another contrariety, several others in fact. Billy checked off the various contrarieties on his fingers. The gleam of light became a ray, the ray broadened to the bright light of complete understanding.

He hugged his knees and smiled the pleasant, self-satisfied smile of the proverbial cat that has just received the canary into its midst. "I got him! I got him where the hair is short. It's one complete cinch."

EARLY one morning several days later the sheriff *pro tem.* of Crocker County was roused by rappings on the office door. Being an experienced man, Shotgun Shillman did not open the front door. He went round the back way with his gun in his hand. But his caution was needless. For, on circling the house, he found no one at the front door but Dan Slike—a hatless Dan Slike flat on his back in the dust, tied hand and foot, and with a gag in his mouth. Looped round Dan's ankles was one end of a lariat. At the other end of the lariat stood Hazel Walton's riding-horse.

Later in the day Guerilla Melody called on Nate Samson, asked the storekeeper several apparently aimless questions and leafed through the cutlery pages of Nate's hardware catalog. Still later in the day Johnny Dawson rode out of Golden Bar. Only two people besides himself knew that he was bound for the railroad and a telegraph line.

Simon Reelfoot, riding the range that day, met a horseman who said he was strayman for the Wagonwheel outfit north of the West Fork. Did Simon know where Park Valley was? Simon knew, and gave the strayman minute directions.

"Shucks," said the strayman, "I can't carry all that in my head. Here's a envelope and a pencil. Make a li'l map like, will you?"

Simon was not an adept with the pencil. To use either it or a pen required the most perfect concentration and his tongue in his cheek. Wondering greatly at the strayman's claimed inability to remember a few simple landmarks, Simon took the pencil and envelope and bent over his saddle-horn.

"Here," he said after three minutes' work, holding out the envelope, "this ought to fix you up."

To his horror the well-known voice of Billy Wingo at his back concurred readily. "It ought to," said Billy Wingo. "We're obliged to you, Simon. Kindly clasp your hands over your hat."

The envelope and pencil fell to the ground as Simon obeyed. The strayman dismounted and picked them up.

"You oughtn't to have given him that envelope," Billy admonished the strayman. "It has the confession in it. You got to be more careful."

"I will," said the strayman humbly, and tucked the envelope into his pocket.

Simon stirred uneasily on his saddle. Confession! Whose confession? He recalled that there had been several folded sheets of paper in the envelope. Of course Simon could not know that these sheets were white—innocent of either handwriting or printing. But Simon's conscience was a helpful little thing. And Simon's mind was prone to jump at conclusions.

"I'll just take your gun, Simon," murmured Billy. "I don't think you'd do anything reckless, but you might. Slide off easy. That's it. You look kind of bewildered, Simon. Don't know how I got here, do you? Easy, like eatin' pie. While you were hard at work with your pencil Guerilla and I were tippytoeing out of that stand of timber behind us a ways. You shouldn't be so trusting of strangers, feller. *Keep your paws up!* Just because I've felt you all over and haven't found an extra gun or knife doesn't signify you can do as you

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please. You stand right still and steady. Johnny, lets have that envelope. My friend will watch you, Simon, while I glance over this."

Billy took the envelope, fingered out the sheets of paper and unfolded them. His lips moved as he solemnly looked them over. It was apparent to Reelfoot that he was refreshing his memory.

"Simon," Billy said, glancing up suddenly, "why did Conley go south?"

Simon's leathery face assumed a richly jaundiced hue. "I—I dunno!"

"Yes, you do," Billy insisted, striking the sheets of paper with his fist. "We found Conley. He was working for the T U when he died."

Simon's face went even yellower. "I told him not to go," muttered Simon Reelfoot.

"Conley talked before he died," said Billy. "He told me some interesting things about himself—and you. We've got you dead to rights, Simon." Here Billy stuffed the sheets of paper into his trousers pocket and gripped Simon by the throat. "You damned murderer, what did you kill him for?"

At the fierce clutch of Billy's fingers, Simon's shaking legs refused to uphold him longer. He fell on his knees. "I—I didn't kill him!" he spluttered. "He was dead when——"

"You lie! You killed him! Conley said so! You tried to throw the blame on me by leaving behind—" Billy's voice trailed off into silence.

"That was Conley's idea!" screamed the panicky Reelfoot. "He got the hatband and quirt one day when nobody was in the office. I didn't have anything to do with it! Conley shot him too!"

"Conley shot him too, huh? Then you shot Tip your own self?"

"He was gonna squeal! He was gonna get me mixed into that Walton murder! They told me he was! He—he pulled first, I tell you! It was an even break! I was drunk! I didn't know what I was doing! Oh, my Gawd!"

Billy flung the groveling Simon from him. "This ought to be enough for you."

Guerilla wagged an admiring head as he set about securing the arms of the wretched Reelfoot. "Gotta give you credit, Bill. I never thought it would work."

"I did," said the strayman, Johnny Dawson. "I've seen it done before. Most folks are sheep when it comes to a bluff."

"Don't tie him too tight, Guerilla. Might as well ask him some more questions."

THAT evening there was another prisoner in the Golden Bar calaboose. "If they keep on coming in like this," said Shotgun Shillman to Riley Tyler, "we'll have to build an addition to the jail.'

"The more the merrier," grinned Riley Tyler. "Listen to that skunkified Reelfoot! You'd think he was having the horrors the way he's carrying on."

"Did you hear what he said about leaving a lantern outside the cell all night, account of Tip haunting him in the dark?"

Riley nodded. "I heard. His nerve has gone completely bust."

"It's funny how he keeps insisting that Bill Wingo was with Guerilla and that Dawson man when they captured him. Why, everybody knows Bill Wingo is far, far away." Thus Shotgun Shillman, his tongue in his cheek.

"Damfunny," Riley assented with a wink. "Especially when Guerilla and Dawson said they hadn't seen a sign of Bill, not a sign. You might almost think Simon Reelfoot was mistaken."

"You might," chuckled Shotgun Shillman. "I wonder, speaking as man to man and not as sheriff *pro tem.* to his deputy, where Bill is anyway."

"Probably in town this minute. It would be just like him."

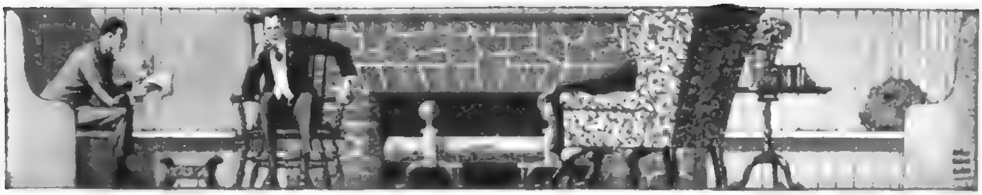
"Guessin' thataway is bad business," Shotgun reproved Riley. "Besides, you're mistaken. If we thought Billy was in town it would be our duty to hop out and arrest him, wouldn't it? You bet it would. So we don't think he's in town. That is certain sure. You wanna mix a li'l common sense with you job, Riley."

You keep on expressin' opinions so free and easy and first thing you know folks will think we ain't so anxious to arrest Bill."

"Some of 'em think so now."

"Ain't that the public all over!" exclaimed the justly indignant Shotgun. "Tell you, an honest officer of the law is never appreciated, never. Is that bottle empty, Riley?"

How did the sheriff bring about the final discomfiture of his enemies? "The Rider of Golden Bar" will be concluded in the November number, out October 15.



Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

THERE is something of the unusual connected with "Foraker's Folly," the new serial by Harold Titus, which begins in the November EVERYBODY'S. He was moved to write the story as a duty to his country—to the future—because, as he says, "I saw my playground (the great lumber forests) going." He continues:

I have tried in "Foraker's Folly" to show what the Michigan pine belt would have been like if fire had never gone through after the first pine was taken off. It is not too late yet. There are millions of acres that will grow pine in the Lake states if they are given a chance, and although I have localized my story in Michigan, it might as well have been placed in any other state that has been largely cut over; the problem is universal; it should strike home to every one of us.

MR. TITUS'S earliest impressions were of the things that have to do with lumber, for he was born in Traverse City, Michigan (1888), and in childhood he used to sit at a window watching a seemingly endless procession of logs go by.

I was too young to realize that the incredible had happened: that the pine was gone, that there was at last a market for hardwood. The Big Mill was running. I can still see its great burner, the tip a glowing nipple against the winter sky, with the wind from Grand Traverse Bay sending out its spark-hung streamer of smoke. All winter the logs came into town; all summer the schooners stood up the bay to await their place at the docks and be loaded with sweet-smelling lumber and nosed away from the wharves by the *Mary MacLean* and lift their sails and be gone. And then the Big Mill went and the town commenced to talk of potatoes instead of lumber. The wood-working factories moved their camps farther away and fewer sleigh loads of logs came into town; the railroads yanked endless trains of hardwood to the sidings along the rollways on Boardman Lake, and when the old houses were rebuilt and carpenters ripped off white-pine shingles and looked at the great, pegged sills, they shook their heads and said that such stuff couldn't be found nowadays.

THE author went to university, began writing fiction, then the war and two years away from the section where he had spent his boyhood.

I became very hungry (he continues) for this country during those months of slogging around and waiting to get across or somewhere. I used to dream about the plains: about the Boardman River country, about the upper Manistee, about the Au Sable, Big Creek and the other places I liked. It was in April, 1918, that I made my first trip to the Manistee River after that absence: We crossed Grayling Bridge and swung up-stream through what had been a most delightful forest of jack-pine, one of the spots I could see whenever I closed my eyes and listened to Corporal Potash snore beside me. The trees were not there! They had been cut for pulpwood; their tops littered the ground, drying out, making acres of explosive material!

We stopped the car and damned the men who had ravished that stand of young timber, and that afternoon we saw a doe, swimming frantically downstream, and far off in the swamp heard the voice of a hound. "They're taking off what trees are left and they're dogging our deer," I said. "What are we, who love to be among trees and animals, going to do?"

HIS indignation was mounting and it wasn't long before Mr. Titus decided to write a novel with reforestation as the purpose.

I brushed around in our state forests (he continues), and saw the wonders that have been worked by just keeping fires out and giving trees a chance to rear their families. I saw artificial reproduction working out, and a great many other things. I took my problem to lumber barons; to lumberjacks; to Professor Roth, head of the Forestry Department in our state university; to biological survey men; to ornithologists; to community boomers. I found that it tied up with the problem of keeping farmers off poor land, of making every acre work, but making it work in a way that will show a profit. Twice I started this novel and gave up, because with every fact I learned, an appreciation of my own ignorance became greater; but in December I felt that I had enough to go on, so I whaled out the first chapters and managed to finish the actual writing in a little over four months. That's how it all came about: because I saw my playground going.

NOT so long ago a member of EVERYBODY'S staff read a book by Gridley Adams, which had been published for private circulation. There were so many laughs in it that he passed the volume on to the editor and now "Prose or Worse," by Gridley Adams, is one of the most popular features of the magazine. We have always been curious to know what humorists were like, so we decided to explore "Grid," as his friends call him.

"And now, Mr. Adams," we asked him, "to what do you attribute your keen nose for the funny side of things?" His reply:

I don't know unless fate, which gave me a stern visage [see picture at head of "Prose or Worse" to appreciate this], must have intended to balance things up a bit by giving me the gift always to see the funny side of things—to catch the sunshine, no matter what the weather—why, take the toad—you know what Shakespeare said about its recompense for being so ugly and venomous.

RECENTLY he attended the funeral of one of his friends, and the whole proceeding was so somber that "Grid" straightway wrote his own obsequies. "I don't want any gloom when I am entering into that lovely Vale of Dreams," so instead of the usual proceedings he has selected a number of his favorite poems and songs to be read and sung as his only eulogy. "I want my real friends with me on *that* occasion."

He is by birth a Connecticut nutmeg nurtured in Massachusetts and transplanted in Chicago. His father was a contributor to the press and the son accompanied him on visits to newspaper offices, which probably explains why he broke into print at the age of eleven. Being rather a noted boy chorister, musical stars were the first celebrities to appeal to them. He interviewed a number of them. Then his tastes turned dramatic and he wrote about stage stars.

Next he wanted to go on the stage; he won some fame as an amateur actor, but he thanks his stars that Fate made him a *bad dodger*. At a certain performance one of his friends had a cabbage presented to him, at which "Grid" walked to the footlights and said: "Appreciation always warms the cockles of any actor's heart, but I surely don't want any one to lose *his head* over me." Also at one time he came near taking up Architecture as a profession, because his earliest pastime had been that of drawing houses. Now he realizes it was intended that he was to *draw houses*, but of another kind. The lucrativeness of the commercial world caught him, and he soon found himself writing the advertisements of the then famous Columbia Bicycles, and for the last few years his main meal ticket has been the preparation and writing of advertising, and in which field he has few equals. The Adams hobby is the proper respect and use of the United States flag. He writes letters to offenders—"unconscious offenders," he prefers to call them. As he is one of the Adamses on one side, and on the other a descendant from the "Gridley" who was a roommate at Yale of Nathan Hale, "Grid" thinks that patriotism is in his blood, and therefore he must fulfil his destiny.

THERE were some interesting passages in Mr. Stephen French Whitman's sketch of himself which could not be used in September for lack of space. When the author of "Sacrifice" was a reporter on the New York *Evening Sun* he wrote each week a humorous story for the Saturday edition, "illustrating these atrocities" to use his own language, "with still more outrageous cartoons."

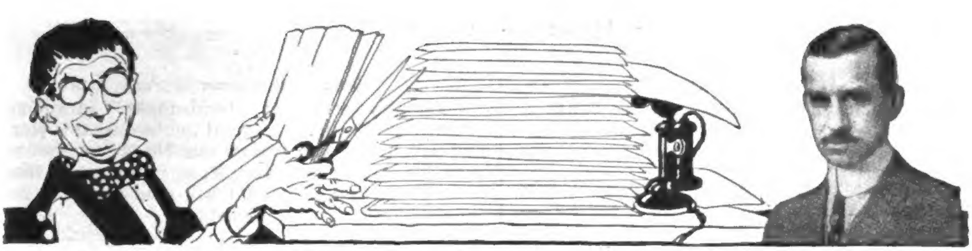
Those cartoons! (he goes on) I believe that the cubists, the post-impressionists, and the infantilists, really owe everything to them. Infantilism. In parenthesis, and on reflection, I am rather pleased with that word. If somebody else hasn't already thought of it, I contribute it gladly as a designation for many interesting tendencies in modern art.

And then he seriously discusses art. "I am best satisfied in art," he says, "by the realism that is tinctured with romance, with beauty and poetry, with such warm, yet temperate splendor as one finds, for instance, in the work of Conrad."

AUTHORS adopt different methods of making preliminary sketches or scenarios of their novels. Mr. Whitman's preliminary sketches take the form of maps.

I make the plans of what I am going to do, on large sheets of cardboard, ruled with many lines and curves in pencil-marks of various colors, and covered with balanced masses of note, till the whole affair looks like the design of a cantilever bridge mixed up with the family-tree of some very polygamous Oriental patriarch. But despite all this preparation I seldom get a chapter done without reshaping it two or three times; and then I fix it a bit in the printer's proofs; and then, when the book has been published, I see how much better it might have been if only——

SEWELL HAGGARD.



As the public sees him.

As he really is.

Prose or Worse *by* Gridley Adams

(Tuttle, N. D., Star)

At the burning of a barn at Steele recently our County Superintendent displayed some nerve and pluck. Miss Hinman did not wait for the men to get there but hastened to the barn without stopping to dress, and in bare feet untied the horses before they had become unmanageable, thus saving them with little trouble. There is not a man, we venture to say, in all Steele but what would stopped to put on his pants before venturing out into the crisp air, but she didn't.

Men reporters don't always know when styles change.

Chatham, Mass., Jan. 21—After high seas had driven back life-savers attempting to reach the two-masted schooner *Adelbert Ames*, wrecked today, Capt. Hart and his crew of seven men were rescued by boys in breeches.

Where "Miss Hinman" wouldn't be in it.

(Seattle Post-Intelligencer)

Congenial young business man desires comfy, homelike room in likable widow's home; state full particulars. Address F. 52.

Would late husband's slippers, pipe and smoking-jacket be sufficiently tempting?

(Sign in Aurora, Ill., wash-room)

The last person here left everything in nice order for you. Please see that you leave it in nice order for the next party. This includes straightening out the towel so that it will dry.

I stood mine up in the corner.

(From a letter from Florida)

I've fallen in love with salt-water bathing. It feels wonderfully refreshing here, below the equator.

Boy, bring me the anatomical charts.

(Decatur Herald)

"Born, to Mr. and Mrs. W. O. Markham, 419 West White Street, a son, northeast of Clinton. It will be 36 x 40."

Another Gulliver.

(Ohio State Journal, Columbus)

The bride was dressed in a conventional wedding-gown of white. The groom wore a flowing black coat with an elaborate white vest decorated with real pearls. His shoes were of black with real lace shoestrings. Imported gray broadcloth trousers of the latest cut and make, white gloves and a white cravat of fine Indian linen, together with collar, shirt and handkerchief of similar material, completed his perfect costume. For a traveling suit the groom wore a tailored suit of blue serge with handsome tan shoes and imported felt hat.

My dear, you should have seen him.

(Springfield, Ill., Register)

A "Hard Times" party was given at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Carles Krusa last Saturday evening. The young men were attired in overalls with straw hats, while the young ladies were dressed in aprons and as "milkmaids." The evening passed rapidly.

So rapidly that nothing didn't linger in the lap of anything.

(Anna, Ill., Democrat)

Mr. Eddy Montgomery of Buncombe and Mrs. Ellen Montgomery of Friendship were married in Cypress Jan. 9. Mr. Montgomery is one of Buncombe's business men and the bride is the widow of Chas. Montgomery, her first husband, and her second husband was W. F. Montgomery, both deceased being brothers to Mr. Eddy Montgomery the third husband.

Male and female created he them.

(Sault Ste. Marie Star)

Wanted—Board in quiet family where good example would be considered sufficient recompense; family must not have more than two children, and must retire not later than 10 P.M. Methodist family preferred. Address with references, Box 64, *Star* office.

Oh, how he hates himself.

(Title of an article on the ladies' page)

Common Mistakes We Make in Bedrooms.

What! do they still blow out the gas?

Copyright, 1921, by Gridley Adams.

(Toledo Times)

Buckeye soldier nearly meets death at hands of army mule.

(Milwaukee Free-Press)

In making a picture for the Warner Feature Company, Miss Gene Gauntier had a narrow escape from death at the hands of a snake.

Those deadly index fingers.

(Benton, Ind., Review)

Earl Atkinson and Opal Atkinson were in Fowler Monday. Earl is getting along fine since he was kicked last by the mule.

Oh, you can get accustomed to 'most anything.

(Jacob's Orchestra Monthly)

Wanted—To hear from hotels or cafés anywhere desiring the services of a first-class orchestra of four pieces, father, son, daughter, and traps.

What gender are "traps"? (Can they mean the old woman?)

(From suit filed against Burlington R. R.)

The deceased was violently hurled into the air and instantly killed. Although taken to a hospital and given the best of treatment he never regained consciousness.

Well, he didn't want to go through it again.

(Streator, Ill., Free-Press)

The hostesses wore paper caps, white aprons and a red carnation.

If the weather had changed the carnation would have helped some.

(Dr. G——, to class in neurology)

It goes without saying that dogs smell better than we do.

Sure, they don't wait for Saturday night to come around.

(Earlville, Ia., Phoenix)

Minnie Wendt and Phena Gone of Delphi visited at the Fred Roloff home Sunday.

Parting guests that speed themselves.

Young Lady wants housekeeping in bachelor's home. No objection to children. Box 17 R. *Gazette.*

Chicago papers please copy.

(Middleville Sun)

Marion Benaway has painted A. H. Bell's front. It looks much better.

Iodine?

(Letter from customer in Texas)

Send me your catalog of tombstones. I am going to be in the market for several tombstones this year, and say, could you enclose one No. 4 buckshot in with the catalog for a sample, as I have a rifle that looks to be that size and I will send you an order for six pounds of round bullets.

Time for several to duck.

(From a Chicago Salesmanager's letter)

We would like to have a kick from you—a straight-from-the-shoulder kick! You can make it just as loud and long as you wish. The bigger it is the better we will like it.

Boy, have we got a tape measure, 'round here?

(South Haven, Mich., Tribune)

A good elderly lady wants to travel with elderly man. None but good need answer. 174 Parish St., Battle Creek.

2 to 1 she never hears from that ad.

(Hinsdale, Ill., Doings)

Wanted—A nice gentleman to take care of a perfect lady's horse what can speak German. Telephone Hinsdale 205.

Neigh, neigh, not for mein.

(Announcement of Transportation Club, Chicago)

Seats will be $3.50 per plate.

Shouldn't this have been in clothing store ad of boys' suits?

(Ypsilanti Press)

Lost—Will the lady driving high seat open buggy, sorrel horse, who found long pants in her buggy, left by boy who was riding with her Friday afternoon, please leave pants at *Press* office and receive reward.

Hurry! very pressing.

(Covington, Ind., Republican)

The Rev. Eli Perkins called on the Woman's Sewing Circle yesterday and they mended his trousers while he waited.

A-hem!

(St. Cloud, Minn., Journal-Press)

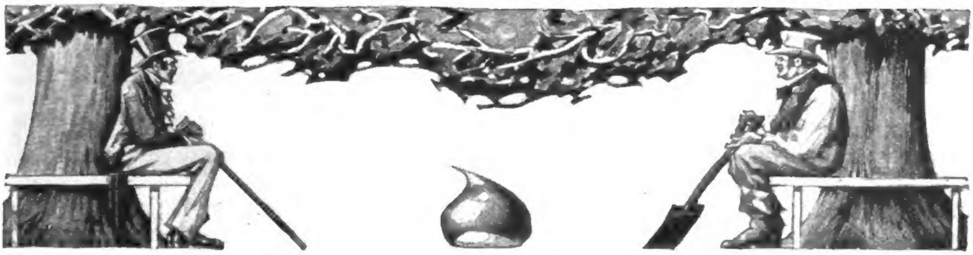
He was gored by an infatuated bull.

One of ranch life's little pleasantries.

(Sent to an Iowa paper, but omitted)

Martin Mason is taking a trip on his honeymoon through Iowa, Colorado, and California, his wife looking after the farm and family.

That's what I call a real honeymoon.



Everybody's Chestnut Tree

EDITOR'S NOTE: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped, addressed envelope.

PARSON BONES was preaching to his dusky flock in his usual flowery language.

"Breddern," he said, "when we get to hebben, we's all gwine to hab long white robes, and we is all gwine to hab long white wings——"

"Parson," came from some one in the back of the room, "I wants to know how we is gwine to get dem long white robes on ober dem long white wings?"

"Nigger, you don't need to worry about how to get dat long white robe ober dem long white wings. What you is gwine to worry about, is how to get your hat on ober dem long black horns."

WHAT true friendship consists in depends on the temperament of the man who has a friend. It is related that at the funeral of Mr. Scroggs, who died extremely poor, the usually cold-blooded Squire Tightfist was much affected.

"You thought a great deal of him, I suppose?" some one asked him.

"Thought a great deal of him? I should think I did. There was a true friend. He never asked me to lend him a cent, though I knew well enough he was starving to death."

AMONG the passengers that were crossing the lake in a storm were two ministers. When matters became most critical a woman cried out, "The two ministers must pray!" The Scottish boatman looked at the two clerics a moment and then said, "Na, na, the little ane can pray if he likes, but the big ane maun tak' an oar."

DURING the recent shortage of money, which necessitated many banks to call in all their loans, one bank president had an unusual experience:

A prominent garage proprietor who always dealt at the Central Bank had obtained a loan of twenty-five thousand dollars. With this money he had purchased some new automobiles which he hoped to sell in the spring. When the president informed him that it would be necessary to cancel his loan, on account of existing financial conditions, the garage owner went to see the bank's head.

Once inside the office he went straight to the point: "Mr. Jones, how long have you been in the banking business?"

"Thirty years," was the reply.

"Ever been in the automobile business?"

"No," replied the austere financial man.

"Well, then, you're goin' to be."

DURING the late unpleasantness in Europe a certain British regiment was ordered to occupy a devastated and deserted village. On arriving, the only living thing discovered there was a cow which was promptly commandeered for the benefit of the colonel. The adjutant was fortunate in finding a bed of strawberries to which he laid claim for his own use.

As the days passed, he noticed that some of his strawberries disappeared and he had grave suspicions as to who was responsible; he therefore wrote out and posted a notice which read:

"Any one found stealing my strawberries will have his cow shot."

MERRITT C. MEECHEM was elected Governor of New Mexico at the first election at which women had the ballot. He was largely supported by the new voters; one of his preelection promises, which particularly pleased them, being that he would, if elected, appoint a woman upon every state board. When the time came for the fulfilment of that promise, certain gentlemen objected. The governor heard their objections without comment, then leaning back in his chair, said:

"I can best answer you with a story: A Navajo chief had taken to himself six wives, polygamy being an old-time custom of that tribe. The Indian agent heard of it, sent for the chief, explained the government's prejudice in the matter, and ended with the ultimatum that the chief should decide which one of his spouses he wished to retain and tell the remaining five that they no longer were his.

"The chief pondered the matter for some time, then was blessed with an idea. He looked up happily, 'You tell 'em,' he said."

PANHANDLE PETE, broke as usual, one warm summer day strolled into a Bowery saloon, which was full of flies, to "mouch" a drink. Looking the bartender in the eye he said, "If you give me a drink I'll kill every fly in the place." The offer was cheerfully accepted and after downing the drink, Pete walked over and opened the door, stood in the entrance, took off his ragged hat and coat, rolled up his sleeves, spit on his hands, doubled up his fists and said:

"All right, Boss, I am ready: Send them out one by one."

AN IRISHMAN, during the late war, appeared before a recruiting officer in Ireland for the purpose of enlisting. When asked his age, he stated that he was forty-one. The age limits at that time were nineteen to thirty-eight years, but the officer seeing in the man a very desirable recruit, suggested that he might possibly be mistaken and advised him to go out, walk around and think the matter over.

In a few minutes he returned and addressed the officer: "Faith, and it was meself that was mistaken, sor. Sure, it's thirty-eight that I am. It's my ould mither that is forty-one."

"ISE got ter leave you, Miss Martha," said the dusky maid.

"What's the matter, Dilsie?" asked her mistress. "Don't we treat you right, don't we pay you enough?"

"Yassum, dats so all right; but dey is too much shiftin' of de dishes for de fewness of de vittles."

THEY were on their honeymoon and were staying in a big modern hotel. The bride had been shopping, and coming back to the hotel, went direct to the room she believed hers and rapped a gentle little rap. "Honey! Honey! Let me in." A great bass voice came through the closed door, saying:

"Madam! This is no bee-hive. This is a bathroom."

DORIS was radiant over a recent addition to the family, and rushed out of the house to tell the news to a passing neighbor. "Oh, you don't know what we've got up-stairs!"

"What is it?"

"It's a new baby brother!" and she settled back upon her heels and folded her hands to watch the effect.

"You don't say so! Is he going to stay?"

"I guess so," very thoughtfully. "He's got his things off."

A MAN was about to receive the anesthetic, preparatory to undergoing an operation.

"Your minister is here," remarked the surgeon. "Do you wish to see him, before we put you under?"

"No," callously returned the patient. "I do not care to be opened with prayers."

ONE morning there floated into a country school in Charles County, Maryland, a squat seven-year-old of grave and determined bearing who announced he'd come to join. The teacher, occupied at the moment in preparing his classes for the opening exercises, bade him be seated and look on until the business of the day was well in hand. Presently he turned to the applicant, relieved him of a man-size chew of tobacco, and asked:

"Well, little man, do you know your A-B-C's?"

The little man turned on him a gaze of indignant astonishment.

"Why, Great Scott, Mister," said he, "I only been here fifteen minutes!"